WENDY WARD

Contents

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements & Thanks

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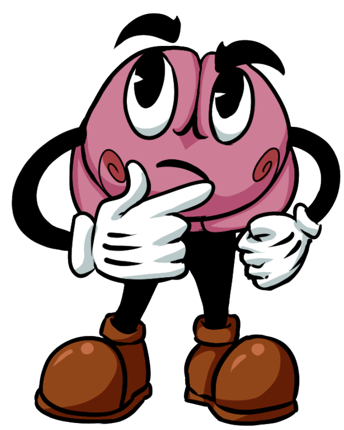
I am grateful for the valuable assistance from the Focus Group consisting of Melissa Alderidge, Tina Cullen, Aynsely Cunliffe, Ian Hearth, and Karen Murray. These individuals read over the work in draft form, provided advice and encouragement, and created the scenarios for practice and application.

The brain graphics and communication models were designed for the text by Luc Grenier (Welland, ON). Luc also designed the cover. His designs made this project real and his patience with my revisions was much appreciated.

I am forever indebted for the review and revision by colleagues and friends in the Academic and Liberal Studies Division of Niagara College, Welland, ON.

It was also my fortune to receive essential assistance in concept and practical development from the NC Center for Academic Excellence Jenn Martin and Nick Contant, and the NC Library Siscoe Boschman and Jackie Chambers-Page.

Ongoing Collaboration



This is meant to be an on-going collaboration with those who use it. During the fall 2021 and winter 2022, the first term Hairstyling Program students at Niagara College provided regular feedback and comments that shaped the revisions.

Please contact me at wward@niagaracollege.ca with comments, suggestions, scenario and exercise additions.

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How to Use this Handbook

Understanding and improving our communication, personally and professionally, is an ongoing journey. This *Handbook* provides a base understanding of the process and essential elements of communication so you can build what suits you and your situation best.

The content covers the Essential Employability Skills established by the Ontario Government for Hairstylists that relate to communications.

> Essential Employability Skills for Hairstylists © 2012, Queen's Printer for Ontario
>
> 1. Communicate clearly, concisely, and correctly in the written, spoken, and visual form that fulfills the purpose and meets the needs of the audience.
> 2. Respond to written, spoken, or visual messages in a manner that ensures effective communication.
> 4. Apply a systematic approach to solve problems.
> 5. Use a variety of thinking skills to anticipate and solve problems.
> 6. Locate, select, organize, and document information using appropriate technology and information systems.
> 7. Analyze, evaluate, and apply relevant information from a variety of sources.
> 8. Show respect for diverse opinions, values, belief systems, and contributions of others.
> 9. Interact with others in groups or teams in ways that contribute to effective working relationships and the achievement of goals.

Each chapter starts with a "Check-in", similar to a pre-boarding for a flight or start of a hotel stay or some other service, to clarify what to expect in the chapter. At the end, you will find a "Check-out" that reiterates the key points covered. References and source materials used to create the chapter are located after the "Check-out", and sometimes places for additional information.

Within the chapter you will find examples of ideas or situations that utilize the example formats or boxes to draw attention to them and to make it accessible for screen readers. There has been an informal review of the text for accessibility to make it AODA compliant.

This *Handbook* can be used to augment course materials or for individual use. Scenarios and Exercises are included and if you wish to contribute suggestions, please email wward@niagaracollege.ca

Basic writing mechanics are covered in Module 5 – What's Wrong and How to Fix it. There are many resources that cover grammar and spelling as their primary focus and please make sure to use whichever you find most useful.

Much of this project was constructed with the belief that incorporating visuals, and making content relevant and personal, makes for stronger material retention. Users are encouraged to visit Doug Neill's excellent YouTube channel and follow *Verbal to Visual*. Incorporating personal drawing when taking notes is a retrieval practice researched and documented by The Learning Scientists Dr. Yana Weinstein and Dr. Megan Sumeracki in their book *Understanding How We Learn: A Visual Guide* (August 2018).

An important part of learning is the reflection on what you've read or seen, how you apply it, and how you've made it yours or incorporated it into your practice. As a result, you will find questions for reflection at the end of each Chapter "Check-out" and a specific chapter addressing Reflection and Feedback (Chapter 12).

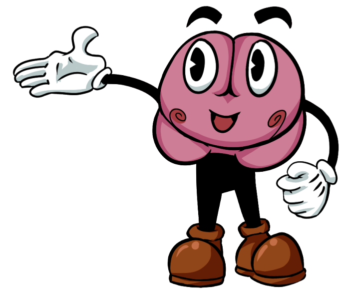
Please provide your feedback. Please adapt this resource for your use. The advantage of an Open Education Resource (OER) is the flexibility to grow and respond to need and suggestions. I welcome your participation.

Sincerely,

Wendy Ward

wward@niagaracollege.ca

January 2022



Resources

Neill, D. (n.d.). Verbal to Visual. https://www.verbaltovisual.com/

Weinstein, Y. and Sumeracki, M. with Caviglioli, O. (August 2018). Understanding How We Learn: A Visual Guide. David Fulton/Routledge. https://www.learningscientists.org/book

Queens Printer of Ontario. Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities. Government of Ontario. (June 2012). Hairstyling Program Standards. http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/audiences/colleges/progstan/aa/HairstylingCAAT.pdf

Media Attributions

- Brain Wave [R] © Luc Grenier

SECTION I

COMMUNICATION FOUNDATIONS

1. Principles and Models of Communication

Principles

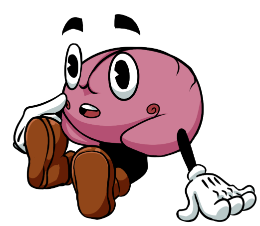
Chapter 1 Check-in

Communications Models

- Linear
- Interactive
- Transactional

Principles and Models of Communications

Everyone has faced a blank screen or sheet of paper and felt lost. The block is common in every creative process and communication is no different. What makes the block less of a stop is having a plan. Getting from A to B needs navigation, building a bookcase needs a blueprint, wiring a house needs schematics, and cutting hair needs a plan.



Brain Cramp

Preparation involves different elements and when done well, makes the creation easier. Organizing information based on the needs and expectations of your audience allows you to focus on the writing during the creation stage.

Filling in the details from your organization and outline allows you to focus on the words to establish the connections from point to point. Choose the words based on what you know of your audience: write to meet those needs.

The final touch is to review and revise the final product: check the connections, trim the unnecessary, and find the perfect words. Revision is the mirror check before you step outside.

The *Handbook* outlines the principles to help you develop an effective style to build effective communication with clients, co-workers, employers, officials, and even family and friends.

We start with a brief understanding of how communication works – a schematic of the process – to provide a framework of what to check when something goes wrong so you can fix it for the next time.

Communication is trust.

Every communication with another person is an example of your integrity: you tell me the truth, and I tell you the truth. You are delivering a message to share an idea or information with another person. To connect with someone else, you demonstrate your reliability. In the Personal Care Trades, that trust is foundational. How you communicate will build that confidence, or the client will move to another service provider.

Your communication style is how you use various elements to express your idea to someone else and receive information from others. Choose your communication techniques carefully to ensure your message is clear and consistent in content and delivery, and context appropriate.

Understanding communication theories makes it easier to design messages to be understood. Models provide visual explanations of concepts to help reinforce a theory by using more than one way to describe the information [The Learning Scientists]. Many people spend years in this academic field of study. We all spend our lives learning how to relate to those with whom we work and live.

What follows is a brief overview of the three basic communication models.

Check the reference information at the end of this section for further reading suggestions.

Questions to guide your reading:

- What is similar and what is different between the models?
- Why are the models divided along these lines?
- What model best describes your daily interactions?
- Are there parts of communication you think are missing from the models?
- How would you draw the interaction?
- What would you remove or add?

Principles: Communication Model

Linear Model

(Terms used: sender, encode, channel, decode, receiver, noise)

This first model covers the basic process: a sender delivers a message to a receiver.

There are three key steps to make this happen. The sender must put the content into a code (*encode*) and choose a method of transmission (*channel*) to reach the receiver who in turn will (*decode*) the message.

Coding and channel can be confusing. The code is what the sender chooses to represent the information and the receiver must be able to understand or decode that system. This is the language. The Channel is about the transmission method. That could be a telephone call, a letter, an Instagram post, a song, a poem, skywriting, or just about anything. Noise is what prevents any part of this system from being successful: it is a barrier to communication.

The linear model is concerned with the one-way flow from the sender to the receiver. The focus is on the sender and the sender's message. There is little consideration for the content of the message, the delivery, the context of the situation, potential barriers, and even the person or people receiving it.

This is a great example of situations when no response from the receiver is required, expected, or requested. Examples of such linear communication include videos, audio files, articles, books, lectures (school and parental) and it goes on.

Interactive or Interaction Model

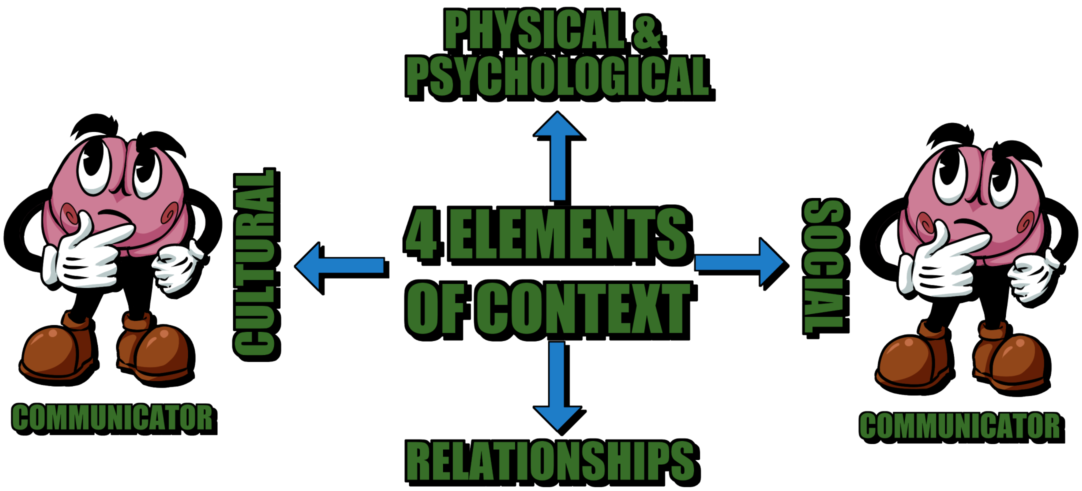
(Terms used: sender, encode, channel, decode, receiver, feedback, noise, physical context, psychological context).

This model marks communication as participation: the communicator role is shared between those involved. The sender delivers a message (encoding and choosing a channel, and the receiver decodes) to which a response is requested and even expected. This can take the form of conversations either in person or through texts, phones, emails, seminars, and discussions in a variety of forms. Sender and receiver roles are shared, and feedback is essential for the exchange. The focus is on the feedback loop – a back and forth interchange.

Context of where the communication takes place (physical) and the participants' personal beliefs, backgrounds, and cultures (psychological) are included as important factors to the experience. These factors can contribute to 'noise' or barriers to communication. It is the communicator's responsibility to analyze the physical and psychological factors and modify the message – content, code, and channel – to reach the other communicator and maintain that feedback loop.

Transaction Model

(Terms used: communicators, co-creating of meaning, four elements of context: physical & psychological; social; relationships; cultural)



This communication model reflects the increase in the number of people you can communicate with at the same time, the impact technology has on channels for communications, and the development of theories and meaning. This is where it gets messy and even more interesting as a field of study.

The communicator bears the responsibility for analysis of the message, audience, situation, and physical and psychological factors that influence the exchange. It is the communicator's superpower. Unfortunately, it also means that the communicator is responsible for the successful transmission and understanding of the message. If the audience doesn't understand, it is not their fault. If communication breaks down, it means the communicator didn't think about the message, the audience, the context, and the delivery enough to make the connection.

How to use the model information

Understanding how the process works provides a tool to figure out why the communication broke down and plan how to avoid that breakdown in the future.

Your communication style is how you deliver information and by how your audience receives your message.

Chapter 1 Check-out:

- Recognize the communication model for any given situation

What communication model is used when you are texting?

Resources

Melissa Alman. (2020). Introduction to Professional Communications. Chapter 3.2 The Communication Process in the Real World. [online]. https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/professionalcomms/chapter/3-2-the-communication-process-communication-in-the-real-world-an-introduction-to-communication-studies/

Chris Drew, Ph.D. (February 23, 2020). All 8 Models of Communication, Explained! [online]. https://helpfulprofessor.com/communication-models/

Megan Sumeracki. (2019). Six Strategies for Effective Learning: A Summary for Teachers. [online]. The Learning Scientists blog. https://www.learningscientists.org/blog/2019/11/28-1

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2. Prepare

Chapter 2 Check-in:

- Understand the SHAPE of Communications: Situation, How, Audience, Purpose, and Evaluate
- Know your Audience – AAA Worksheet

Preparation is key to creating anything, including communications.

How much preparation you need depends on the situation, the people you are interacting with, and your end goal. A text message to say hi to your friend clearly does not need the preparation a blog post on winter hair care does. However, each still involves you, the communicator, understanding the situation, the audience, and your purpose.

Communication needs SHAPE. Think about these prompts before developing your message. *There is a* ***SHAPE Worksheet*** *in the Appendix you may use to help outline the background information.*

Situation

Take a moment to think about the situation and context. Examining the situation will help you determine what you know about the topic and what information you need in order to be clear. Gathering information could be as simple as asking a question of your audience (and listening to the response), or more involved and require external material to create your blog post or recommendation on which product to use. Step back and describe the setting and circumstances to understand what you know and what you need to know. This will be situation specific and may be a few words, or a page or two covering the research you need to conduct and information to gather.

Example Scenario

- *Client appointment for 1:00 pm.*
- *Client lives in a different city – 30 minutes drive away.*
- *It is now 1:30 pm and client is not at salon.*
- *Subject: late/missed appointment.*

How/Channel

Choose how to communicate – your channel – by considering four things:

- **Cost**: What is the cost of the method? Your phone service fee usually includes all local calls but a registered letter costs $20.00.

- **Speed**: How quickly do you need to inform the audience? If the information is essential, perhaps a telephone call or text is best. How quickly do you need a response?
- **Importance**: Do you need a record of the communication? When you pay a bill or place an order, it is good to have the receipt or description of the service in writing.
- **Relationship**: What is your relationship with the audience? A text message is usually less formal than a telephone call. Think about the basis of your relationship – your boss, an employee, a colleague, a client, a friend, a service provider, etc. – and choose a channel that reflects it.

Remember to choose a channel the audience can access. You won't reach someone by telephone if the number is disconnected or there are technical reasons why the phone isn't working. If your communication is important, you may decide to use two methods to ensure delivery.

Example Scenario continued

- *A telephone call or text message doesn't 'cost' anything and is the fastest way to reach the client. It will also provide immediate feedback if the client answers. It isn't as formal as a letter, and if this is the first time he's late, then there is no need to be very formal: it's not a warning. A phone call or text message is also friendly, which describes the current relationship.*

Audience

The most important person in the communication loop is the audience. Your job as a communicator is to make sure the audience understands and to do that, you must understand your audience.

It is not necessary to create a full profile of every person with whom you communicate. A basic understanding will help you plan how best to proceed. *There is an **Audience Analysis and Action worksheet** in Appendix A that you may find helpful.*

There are four primary areas to know about the audience: the demographics; current knowledge of the situation and subject; the expectations and needs; and what the relationship is.

Audience **demographics** refers to those external characteristics that are measurable: age, gender, education level, culture, economic background, etc. The information is used to help you understand the language to use: if the audience is a recent immigrant whose first language is not the same as yours, you need to make sure you minimize any barriers that could develop through written communication. Choose simple, easy to understand words with uncomplicated sentence structures. The same is also true if you are writing to someone who may be reading in a very noisy location and they can't focus for a long time.

Knowing what the audience **already knows** or thinks about a subject is also valuable. It saves you time repeating information, which could also bore the audience which would mean they stop paying attention immediately. You also know whether or not they agree with your message and that is essential. This helps you plan what information to include and what order of material to use.

Expectations and needs are essential to understand. If you want to make sure you don't disappoint, you must know what is expected of you and your information. When you are in a situation where these are not clear, you can include an outline of what information you will provide which allows you to state what the expectations are and how you are going to meet them.

Identifying the **relationship** between you and your audience reminds you first, to always treat an audience with respect and second, to modify your approach and language to suit the relationship

To return to our example scenario:

- *He is 28 years old, single, and quit his job at the bank last year to go back to college and become an auto mechanic. Quitting meant he moved in with his parents in a nearby city but now he has to drive further to get to appointments.*
- *He has been a client for 6 years and used to get his haircut every 2 months but now is coming every 6 months. He has never been late before.*
- *You have a friendly relationship, first name basis, and share a passion for cigars and whiskey.*

Understanding 'who' you are communicating is the foundation of empathy. When you communicate with the audience as your focus, you will have an easier time planning successful and effective communication.

Purpose

While there are three general reasons we communicate – to inform, persuade, or entertain – these easily mix. You can use information to persuade in an entertaining manner or any variation of the combination.

If you are not clear what your message is about and what you wish to accomplish, it is almost guaranteed the audience won't know what you are saying either. Make sure you write a clear purpose statement *before* you start drafting or speaking. Have the point of your exchange in mind before you start.

Sometimes, your purpose may shift from what you originally planned to an alternate because your audience analysis reveals the response to your original message is probably going to be negative. Planning your purpose gets you to organize the information to be received even if it may not be what the audience wants to hear.

Our example of the client running late continues:

- *As a service provider, you want to make sure the client knows you have to move on to your next client and clients can't just skip appointments.*
- *This is a long-time client and friend: you want to make sure they are safe, and you want to keep them as a client.*

Evaluate

Before picking up the phone, drafting the letter, pressing send on the text or email, or having that conversation, review your content ideas from the audience perspective. Is it clear what you as a receiver are to think or do? Is there enough or too much information? Do you have a positive or negative response?

Potential phone call/voice message with client:Raj, I wanted to make sure you were okay because you missed your appointment today and that isn't like you. Please call or message me to reschedule. Take care, Wendy.

Completing a SHAPE analysis of your communication scenario helps keep you the communicator focused on the audience and your purpose. In the worst case, it takes you an extra 5 minutes before you send an email, write a memo, or make a phone call. In the best case, it prevents misunderstanding that could negatively impact your relationship with another person.

Chapter 2 Check-out

Identify and understand the situation, people, method, and purpose of a scenario to develop your communication plan.

How do you determine how to communicate with someone?

3. Create

Chapter 3 Check-in:

- Structure to build your idea
- Introduction, Body, Conclusion

Structure is essential for effective communication. This framework is your starting point. Three components are necessary: an introduction, the body, and a conclusion. Each part contains material specific to the function of that section. In every situation, the context, audience, and purpose direct the communicator as to what information to place where.

Writing techniques adapt to the situation and purpose of the communication. Many writers follow the "Five Paragraph" essay format, others follow the Toulmin argument structure (Claim, Grounds, Warrant, Qualifier, Rebuttal, Backing) [Toulmin, n.d.): your audience and purpose determines which is best for you to use. The three-part structure (Introduction, Body, and Conclusion) is valid for each method.

Introduction

A solid introduction engages the reader or listener and encourages them to read or listen to more. While you provide an overview of what you are going to discuss, a good introduction doesn't overwhelm the audience with too much detail. Lastly, be clear why the audience should care about your subject: this starts the "so what" to make the topic relevant to them. You will find most introductions contain these three details frequently in this order; that doesn't mean you can't change the order up, or combine all three in one statement. That's determined by the audience, and your purpose.

Get the Audience's Attention: Film producers call this "Bring on the Bears". Grab the audience's attention early to keep them engaged. Some ways of attention getting include:

- Ask a question
- Make a startling statement
- Use a fact
- Use a famous quotation
- Provide a definition

Remember, this sets the tone for your communication and shapes the expectations for the audience. Try not to overpromise.

State your Purpose or Thesis: You need a clear purpose statement or thesis to identify the subject area, and what your attitude towards it is. These statements can be one or more sentences depending on your subject and purpose. Explicitly state the subject and your attitude towards it. When writing, you are the expert so do not put your purpose or thesis in the form of a question as it can leave the audience wondering if you are clear on your purpose. Organization points can be included to provide the audience an overview of what support you will use to explore your subject and explain your approach.

Just last week I had to take the bus.   *Not acceptable: no clear subject or attitude.*

Public transportation is important.   *Better: subject and attitude clear.*

Municipal government support of public transportation is essential for citizens to access work and leisure destinations without negatively impacting the environment or economy.

Best: subject well defined, support areas identified, and attitude conveyed.

Provide context and direction: This is your opportunity to explain why and how this is an important topic and perhaps what action needs to be taken.

Content

Once you have collected all necessary information, and evaluated your sources, it's time to put that material in the best order for your audience. The organization and content should depend on what you want to achieve and what the audience needs.

While the actual content and order changes, the basic structure for paragraphs remains constant. The number of paragraphs and the internal structure for each is based on the context, end goal, and style of the writer.

Each ***paragraph*** contains a topic sentence, support statements, transitions between points and finally, a concluding or transitional sentence that bring you to the next main support. As the paragraph represents a key element of the writer's approach to the subject, each paragraph has a unique point to develop.

Paragraphs are like rooms within your home: each has its own purpose and contains items specific to that room's purpose. You don't expect to find the shower in the kitchen (unless you are living on a boat or camper).

The topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph. It can appear anywhere within the paragraph. Support statements relate directly to the topic sentence. Transition words and phrases link the supports to create a foundation for the topic sentence. Wrapping up the content helps provide clarity for the audience before introducing the next main point in the following paragraph.

Conclusion

Cliffhangers are great for serial videos and books, or anything where your main goal is to keep your audience committed to following you. However, most communication has an end and so a conclusion is necessary to make the overall piece satisfying for the audience. Reword your subject or purpose and remind the audience of the topic's relevance and importance. End with some memorable words: your last chance to make an impression. Conclusions bookend introductions: if you started with a question, answer it in the conclusion. Other ways to tie everything together include making a prediction for the future; using a quotation or statistic; or you could finish the anecdote begun in the introduction.

Visuals

Visuals have always played an important role in communicating with someone else or a group of people. Images encourage personal connection with an audience. Venngage Inc. notes that in 2019, almost 75% of marketers use visuals in their promotional material and that percentage is growing.

Incorporating visuals into your work is more than slapping a photo into a blog post or a graphic into a brochure. You use visuals for several reasons: clarify complicated information including data; establish and maintain a relationship with the audience; connect personally through storytelling; simplify workflow processes; and use colour to attract and identify.

Compelling or beautiful images are very attractive to include and can result in a great looking piece of communication. It is, however, more important to be effective in your selection and use of visuals. If it distracts from your content, then it isn't really an effective visual.

The anagram **PICS** can help remind you of the principles of using visuals: *Personal*, *Inform*, *Clarify*, *Simplify*.

Personal

Choose images or visuals that connect with your target audience. When the audience is incredibly diverse in culture and language, search for simple images that have universal meaning. Check image suggestions and templates online [see Information Literacy, Chapter 6 in this Handbook]. Effective images are personal and can create or break connections so choose with your audience and purpose in mind.

Inform

Your use of a visual should inform the audience, not distract. Avoid using a visual for the sake of using a visual: It must serve a purpose to your content. If it doesn't add to the understanding of your material, re-think using a visual (or that specific visual).

Clarify

Using a visual should clarify the material for the audience, and not make it more difficult to understand. It must relate to the subject or be a common and clear analogy. For example, when exploring personal conflicts, using a pineapple to illustrate a difficult person may be more difficult to understand than a skunk or porcupine. You want the connection between your symbol and the topic to be very clear.

Simple

When selecting images to enhance your content, simple is better. Minimize background distractions and diversions: you are not creating a "Where's Waldo" or find the differences between these two pictures. Images you pick to accompany or represent your message need to be simple and single so your purpose is not difficult to grasp.

Chapter 3 Check-out:

- Structure in three parts
- Purposeful communication

How does your purpose shape the structure of your writing?

Resources

J.R. Dingwall, Chuck Labrie, Trecia McLennan, Laura Underwood. (2017. Updated 2021 Niagara College version) Professional Communications Chapter 6 Using Visuals. [Online] https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/profcommsontario/chapter/using-visuals/

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Toulmin Argument. (n.d.). Online Writing Lab (OWL). Purdue University. [Online] https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/historical_perspectives_on_argumentation/toulmin_argument.html

4. Revise

Chapter 4 Check-in:

- CUT: 3 steps of Revision

Before you leave your home, you check yourself in the mirror to ensure there's no spinach in your teeth, or a wardrobe malfunction. It's the cross check on a client's hair. Revising your communication is no different. It will be someone's first impression of you. Complete that cross check before sending it out.

There are three parts to revision and it is important you don't try to fix everything in one review. Just like a two-in-one shampoo isn't the best treatment for hair, you need to take your time with each stage or you will miss something.

If possible, take a break between writing and revising. It's also valuable to ask for help and have another person look something over. When you have crafted an item, it can be difficult to catch any areas that may not be clear because you know the connections in your head already. Your brain's job is to make sense of the world for your and it recognizes what you meant, or what word *should* be there, and leads you along without a problem because that's the job. When proofreading, you need to re-train the brain for a different job. You'll find some tips here to help you and your brain.

Revision involves checking the content, structure, and accuracy of your work. You can use the acronym **CUT**: **Content, Unity, correcT**.

Content

Review your material and check for the content: purpose statement, main points, support, transitions, and conclusions. Check that there is enough information and that it is in the best order for your audience. Support for your purpose, theme or thesis, is like a stool you sit upon: a one or two legged stool is not as sturdy as a stool with three or four legs. Each main point should be distinct from the others, it must be significant to the purpose, and should have enough support itself to be a main point. This is a concept check.

Unity

Review your paragraphs and ensure there is one main idea in each. Ensure there is a clear topic sentence, and that the information in the paragraph relates specifically to the topic sentence of that paragraph. If it doesn't relate, cut it. If it needs rewording to make the connection to the paragraph topic clearer, then reword it. This step checks your information is united.

correcT

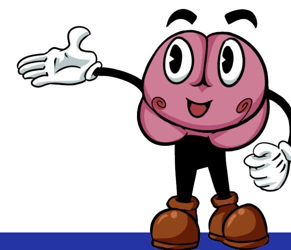
Your last step is to review sentence structure, word choice, spelling, and punctuation. Make sure you follow the Standard English rules so what you write or say is what the audience reads or hears.

Use Spell-Check and all resources you can. Ask another person to review the work as well: it is difficult to catch mistakes when you are the person who wrote them. You can also read word-by-word starting at the *right* side of the page rather than the left. This stops the brain from making sense of what you see so you see what is actually there.

Check that commas are used correctly and don't create comma splices. Remove excess punctuation (watch the !!! as it can be unprofessional).

If you are using outside information in your material, there should be a check on your incorporation of the the information. Double check that quotations are the same as the original with " " around

the passage. Check your documentation where you use external proof and ideas, and made sure that in-text documentation matches up with the References entries at the end of your piece. If you have images in your material, make sure you have provided that documentation as well. IEEE standards are followed in Trade s professions and it is your responsibility to follow those standards (Chapter 6: Information Literacy).



This final check ensures your information and writing is correcT.

Chapter 4 Check-out:

- Content, Unity, correcT

How do you check for unity in your writing?

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SECTION II

PROFESSIONAL WRITING AND COMMUNICATIONS

5. Strategies

Chapter 5 Check-in:

- Direct & Indirect Strategies
- Comparison writing
- Write for your Audience: Gunning Fog and Flesch-Kincaid
- Writing techniques: Active/Passive, You View, Parallel Structure, and Tone

Communicating in professional situations demands your attention to ensure you make and leave the kind of reputation you want. Building on the foundations, these communication strategies and techniques equip you with tools to create communications and respond to situations objectively and with an audience focus.

Direct and Indirect Strategies

These strategies refer to where you deliver "news" in your communication. You decide where to place that news based on how you think your audience will respond to the information. Most frequently used for person-to-person writing, these two organization methods are valuable to remember for both written and oral communications.

After completing the audience analysis, you should have a good idea how your audience will receive your information. If you anticipate a positive reception, the news is delivered up front and the background material or reasons follow it. If, however, you believe the audience will not respond positively to the news, then it is best to shift your purpose and make sure to provide the reasons prior to delivering what can be termed "bad news".

As the communicator, it is your responsibility to manage the reception of the information and deciding when and how to deliver the news can shift how an audience receives it. When you provide the reasons before the main point you are buffering the news, or action. It allows you to seek agreement from the audience on smaller points to help explain the course of action that follows.

Think of a time when you asked someone for a favour when you weren't sure the answer would be "yes". You probably put the reasons before the request: you used the indirect strategy.

There are many times when delivering what may be perceived as "bad news" needs to be done before the explanations and buffer. If there is no negative response anticipated, if there is reason to believe the audience already knows the news is coming, or any other reason for the emotional response being reduced.

The placement of the information is always dependent upon how you think the audience will respond.

Direct	Anticipated + Audience Response	Indirect
Goodwill Purpose Statement *Brief* Background	Introduction	Goodwill Purpose Statement: • be careful not to state the bad news too early *Brief* Background
Details in order of audience interest/need	Body	BUFFER: REASONS for decision/action • in order of audience interest
		"BAD" News – in order of audience interest • Alternate • Passive Voice
Next Steps Reword Purpose Goodwill	Conclusion	Next Steps Reword Purpose Goodwill

Comparison Strategies

Comparing two or more items is something we do regularly when shopping, choosing clothing, or activities. In writing, there are two specific ways of handling comparisons to make it easier to ensure equitable comparisons and clear information.

It is essential that in any comparison, the items selected can truly be compared and the criteria for evaluating them is equal to each. For example, when evaluating what house pet to select, comparing a dog and a dolphin is not a valid comparison as a dolphin doesn't really qualify as a house pet. When selecting criteria for the evaluation, those points need to be equally valid to the item. Evaluating a laptop and desktop computer on portability is not treating the items for comparison equally: desktop computers are designed to be set up in one location while laptop computers are designed to be taken where you go.

When conducting a comparison make sure you are clear on the items you are evaluating and the criteria you are using. Be specific about the end goal for the evaluation as well.

The Block method focuses on the items to be evaluated and then speaks to the criteria. The Point-by-Point method focuses on the criteria used to evaluate and then deals with each item in the discussion.

For example, if we were to evaluate cell phones as the items, Apple 10 cell phone and Samsung S11, we could select camera, storage, battery life, and cost as criteria. These are similar items with similar claims. We need a new cell phone and these are the criteria most important to us. In fact, we order them from most important to least: cost, camera, battery, and storage.

The Block method would involve an introduction as to the purpose of the evaluation, outline the criteria used, and develop the information in paragraph form. The first body paragraph would discuss the Apple 10 cell phone in terms of cost, camera, battery, and storage. The next body paragraph would discuss the Samsung S11 in terms of cost, camera, battery, and storage. The conclusion recommends a purchase based on the external criteria established.

The Point-by-Point comparison introduces the topic and purpose though places the information with the criteria being most important elements – cost, camera, battery, and storage and the brands to be evaluated as secondary. Development of the body paragraphs starts with the criteria then a discussion of each item in that criteria paragraph.

Write for the Audience

It is also important to make sure your writing is easy for the audience to understand. While that may not always seem simple to calculate, there are tools to help you assess your writing in terms of how much education would be necessary for a person to read and understand.

FOG indexes or readability scales provide the writer a way to measure the readability of a piece of writing: how many years of education a reader would need to comprehend the writing. In the 1940s, American Rudolph Flesch consulted with the Associated Press on ways to increase readability of the newspapers. He developed the Flesch Reading Ease system that provided a percentage score: the higher the score, the lower the reading grade level needed. By the 1970s, the US Navy adapted the Flesch process and adopted the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level reading score. The Navy evaluates training manuals with the system prior to distribution to determine how readable the manuals are [1]. Both these systems use the number of words in a sentence and the number of words with three syllables or more. Both these systems appear in the Word program as part of the Spelling and Grammar check, under Readability Statistics.

To read and understand the paragraph above, you need at least 11 years of education.

Robert Gunning created a simpler readability scale in the 1950s that is frequently used today. Gunning's FOG Index requires 100 consecutive words from a passage. The next step is to count the number of sentences (a mid-sentence ending of the 100 words counts as one) and divide 100 by the number of sentences. This provides you with the average words per sentence (AWS). The next step is to count the number of hard words (those with three syllables or more, not including proper nouns or three-syllable words created by added ed, ing, es) in the 100 words passage. Add the average words per sentences to the total number of hard words and then multiple that number by .4 to determine the Gunning FOG score [2].

The Gunning FOG score on the above passage is 9.84 years of education. The Flesch-Kincaid scale is 9.86.

These readability scores help you analyze your writing to meet the anticipated level of your reader or audience. More important is that it provides you with specific ways to write for your audience. Longer, more complicated sentence structures with more hard -syllable words results in a writing that requires more education years in order to understand. Shorter sentences with fewer hard-syllable words ensures a lower FOG index and writing that requires fewer years of education to understand.

You write naturally at your own education level. If in doubt about the readability level of your audience, be clear and simple.

Other factors can influence the ability of the reader to understand writing. External noise, internal distractions, and reading in a language that is not your first can also make understanding more difficult. Simpler text makes it easier to understand.

Active versus Passive

Active writing has the subject of the sentence doing the action. It is clear, specific, and to the point.

Kim submitted the essay on time.

Passive writing allows the writer to remove the person or thing doing (or not doing) the action and removes any potential blame. The action is done to the subject. Frequently, the past tense is used when writing in the passive form.

The essay was submitted on time.

Both are valid: the writer chooses which is most appropriate for the context and purpose. In particular, when the audience may have a negative response to the communication, it is sometimes necessary to use the passive construction.

Active: We reject your application for credit.

Passive: Your application for credit cannot be approved at this time.

If you aren't sure if you wrote in the passive or active, first find the action (verb) of the sentence, then determine if the subject is doing the action (Active) or if the action being done to the subject (Passive).

You View

To write for the audience also means putting the reader or audience in the center.

Instead of "I like your shirt," which is really about what the speaker likes, use the You View and a compliment becomes relevant to the person you are speaking to: "Your shirt looks fantastic".

It can be as simple as checking how many times you refer to yourself (I, me, mine, my) compared to "you". The more you focus on your audience, the more your audience will stay focused on your writing.

Parallel Structure

You may not know how a list is wrong, but it will feel 'off'. When creating a list of two or more things, you write the list using the same grammatical structure or form for each item. If you have a list of nouns, keep them all nouns: lions, and tigers, and bears. You lose parallel structure by adding adjectives for only one of the items: lions, and stripey tigers, and bears. If you are going to describe one, describe all: fluffy lions, stripey tigers, and lumpy bears.

You use parallel structure to make the reading easier for your audience. It keeps your writing coherent and unified.

Tone

Tone in writing refers to the writer's attitude to the subject and reader, and your word choice and sentence structure conveys it. When there are several consecutive short sentences together, the writer can sound angry. Using words the audience may be unfamiliar with makes the writer sound pretentious and worse, can make the meaning unclear.

Chapter 5 Check-out:

- Direct & Indirect Strategies: based on audience response
- Comparison: Block or Point-by-Point
- Measure your writing: Gunning Fog and Flesch-Kincaid
- Writing techniques: Active/Passive, You View, Parallel Structure, and Tone

How does anticipating your audience reaction determine your strategy?

What writing technique helps you demonstrate concern for the reader?

How can you change your writing to reflect your reader?

6. Information Literacy and Documentation

Chapter 6 Check-in:

- Information Literacy: SIFT the FACTS to avoid CRAAP
- Summary and Paraphrase: information in your words
- IEEE Documentation Standards

Information literacy means you can find, select, evaluate, and use material in your communication. Your reputation depends on your ability to do this accurately. It only takes one instance of including or using unverified or incorrect information to reduce your credibility. You are as trustworthy as the material you use.

Faced with a research project, you can feel powerless very quickly: it can seem like an overwhelming task. Where to begin, where to find information, how to choose what to use, and how to use it properly can result in frustration, loss of motivation, and the inevitable block.

You can use a four-step approach to help you get unstuck when faced with too many choices. Start with a topic. A clear understanding of the information you need helps you be more specific when you are looking for material. Then the four steps: Search, Scrutinize, Select, and Use.

Search

With so many options at our fingertips, it can be difficult to decide where to start your search for information. Don't let that stop you. Think of the primary three tools you can use: the internet, professionals, and friends.

Conversations with friends are good to help you clarify what information you need. It's a form of brainstorming.

Ask a professional – a colleague, teacher, or librarian – they can guide you with topics, and how and where to search. Good search techniques include knowing and finding the right people to ask. If you are in a college program, your college library will have a research database that you can use with access to many databases that are available to students. You can also search using Google Scholar for academic papers. Check the drop-down menu box for Google services. Some of these research sites are free to access, and some require payment or subscription.

Internet searching is the usual first stop: also known as "GTS" (Google That S***). However, it is easy to fall down rabbit holes of distraction so remember to keep yourself focused in order to stay on track. First, set a timer or alarm on your phone. Short 20 minutes searches can keep you focused and on track. It also helps to take micro-breaks between searches. Second, keep a list (handwritten or an open document on the computer) to track your finds and potential sites and sources.

Search terms are important and your results change based on what words you use for the search. Try more than one way of phrasing something. Boolean searches are also ways to be more specific when using a computer for searching. Quotation marks around a word string ("Boolean Search Terms") will provide results with the words "Boolean Search Terms" in that order. You can also use AND, OR, or NOT with Boolean searches to specify what to include or exclude in the results.

When you go through search results, be mindful of the web address. Extensions, the end of the address, can help you decide whether or not to click a link for information. Be familiar with the different types of URL addresses and how they identify a source. Here are some to start your list:

.com, .ca = businesses

.net, .org = non-profit and interest groups

.gov = government

.edu = education

A word of caution is necessary about how internet search engines operate and end up controlling what you find in searches. Algorithms are created every time you search and click on a link. Those algorithms determine what you are likely interested in and therefore the usual search engines will show those results to you first. It is designed to make your experience smoother and easier; however, it also means you end up seeing what you will probably like. Clear your browser history regularly to minimize this. You can also use a research database to remove this pre-selection or filtering of material based on your previous clicks.

For additional search tips, check out your local library. Niagara College has also put together a tutorial for internet searching that will take you 10 to 15 minutes to complete. NC Libraries Search Tips

Scrutinize

Check the material you are going to use. FACTS is an acronym to help you remember questions to ask yourself about the material you are reading/viewing to determine your trust level. Where and how did you **Find** the materials? Is it requesting a specific **Action** from you and does it omit a group from being heard? How **Credible** is the writer, publisher, website, or source? Where does the material appear in the **Timeline** of the subject matter? How old or new is it and does it agree or disagree with other material? Lastly, what are the **Sources** it uses to support the point made? The full information is available through the NC Libraries Information Literacy – Handouts page.

There is the CRAAP method which asks you to verify that the information is Current, or most up-to-date; check that it clearly relates to your topic and point; ensure it is from a source with expertise in the field; check that it is accurate; and examine the purpose of the original material. Others prefer to SIFT the material: Stop, Investigate the source, Find additional material that reinforces the information or is better, and Trace the material back to its original source to ensure accurate reproduction.

Several organizations exist that promote searching out the truth and fact based news. Organizations such as The Pro-Truth Pledge and the News Literacy Project ask individuals, politicians, news reporters, and organizations to stick to evidence. Fake news is not always easy to decipher and it is important to have tools to check and protect. Niagara College has a checklist to help you identify fake news.

Select

Once you have found the source, selecting what passage or information or image to use is your next challenge. Go back to your purpose to help you decide what quotation, statistic, or idea you need.

If you are proving an idea, you may want to reinforce your point with a quotation or idea from a reputable source.

To explain or illustrate something, try using a visual. Images, photographs, charts, and graphs can help make your suggestion or point clearer.

Remember to be careful not to misrepresent the original author or creator’s idea or image and keep track of where you found the material.

Use the document features to help determine what you need. Check headings, highlighted text portions, and pulled quotations: these elements help you identify what the author felt was important to the topic.

Use

When using information or images from another person or place, always give credit or tell the audience where you found the material. In conversation, it is as easy as "This photo was on the HairCare website and I think this is the hairstyle you mean."

Giving credit to the original material is slightly more involved in writing and formal presentations.

Include credit for material in your document when you use it and include a final list called "References" at the end of your document or presentation support display. Be consistent in how you include the information so the reader or audience knows what to expect and how to find the original source.

Documentation Standards

Academic expectations for documenting external information is more rigorous. Within the trades, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) is the standard. You will find other disciplines use different standards: Modern Language Association (MLA), American Psychological Association (APA), and Chicago Style. When asked to document the material you use, make sure to check which documentation standard you need to use.

You should always keep track of the source material you use. Key information is always the author(s)'s name(s), title of the webpage, host website name, URL, and date you accessed. If anyone questions your source, you will have the information at hand.

Regardless of the system used, it is excellent practice to refer to – or reference – what and where you found original material you then incorporate into your work. It is similar to a job interview: you identify your skills and provide the details where you developed the abilities (previous employment, school, volunteer work, etc.). When you identify and provide the background, you increase your credibility.

IEEE Documentation

You document your research and external material such as images or statistics to demonstrate and increase your credibility: you know how to research, select material, incorporate it in your communication, and document information. The quality of your material is a reflection of your qualifications as well.

When you use external information, you immediately make a number notation in square brackets. That is an in-text citation or citation. Every time you use information from that source, you will use the same number. The numbers are determined by the order in which they appear in your document: the first external information is number 1, the second is number 2, and so on.

At the end of your document, you list, in numerical order, the full information needed to find the original material you used. This is "References". There is a specific format to use for each entry based on where you found the material.

For material you found online, follow this format:

[1] First Name Initial(s) Last Name. "Page Title." Website Title. Web Address (retrieved Date Accessed).

Example:

[1] ncLibraries."Borrow items from ncLibraries." ncLibraries and Learning Commons. https://nclibraries.niagaracollege.ca/library/ncborrow (accessed Apr. 15, 2019).

Reference video material using this format:

[2] Video Owner/Creator, Location (if available). Title of Video: In Initial Caps. (Release date). Accessed: Month Day, Year. [Online Video]. Available: url

Example:

[2] ncLibraries. What is a Library Database? (May 24, 2018). Accessed: Apr. 15, 2019. [Online Video]. Available: https://youtu.be/f4IDtk9kepI

There are many internet sites to help you construct your reference entries. Remember to check the reliability of the site before you use it. A great help is to complete the IEEE module available through Niagara College.

Resources on IEEE Documentation

Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers. (2021). https://www.ieee.org/

OWL Purdue, IEEE Overview. (2021). https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/ieee_style/ieee_overview.html

Chapter 6 Check-out:

- Information Literacy
- Summary and Paraphrase
- IEEE Documentation

Why is it important to give credit to the original source?

What can I do to make sure my work is protected?

Resources for Research and Information Literacy

CRAAP – Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, Purpose. (2021). Niagara College Library. https://nclibraries.niagaracollege.ca/ld.php?content_id=34377901

FACTS – Find, Action, Credible, Timeline, Sources. (2022). Niagara College Library. https://nclibraries.niagaracollege.ca/ld.php?content_id=36233248

SIFT – Stop, Investigate, Find, Trace. (2021). Southwestern University. https://infoguides.southwestern.edu/c.php?g=477641&p=3309370

Pro-Truth Pledge. (2021). https://Protruthpledge.org

News Literacy Project (2021) https://newslit.org

Common Sense. (2021) https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship/information-literacy

CIVIX News Literacy (2022) CIVIX News Literacy or https://newsliteracy.ca/

7. Document Principles

Chapter 7 Check-in:

- Document Design: Formats for Emails, Memos, Letters, and Reports
- Email Management tips
- Reports:
  - Formal and Informal
  - Forms, Field/Site, Recommendation, and Progress

Professional writing, while traditionally on paper, is an essential part of the online world as well. However, there are specific differences between the paper and online readers, and writing for the online audience will be dealt with separately (see Chapter 8: Online – Blogs and Vlogs). The channel choice of paper occurs for a couple of reasons: documentation and formality (signing a contract, offer of employment, lease, mortgage, or other legal documents); context of situation; and even audience's preference.

Remember, your writing is always be someone's first impression of you, and first impressions are very difficult to change.

We worked through the process of creating communication in Module 1. Here is a quick reminder of the key elements:

- Audience focus
- Clear purpose
- Organization of material into three parts
- Language level must be clear and correct

Writing for the business audience means including goodwill or common courtesy in both the introduction and conclusion. Goodwill is achieved through your word choice and the starting and ending information content. Goodwill and common courtesy is the respect that fosters positive business relationships. It can be as simple as "please" and "thank you". Mostly, goodwill seeks to make and maintain a respectful business relationship. It can be recalling a recent event or exchange between the sender and receiver, or an expression looking forward to meeting them.

Whatever form your goodwill takes, it must be sincere.

Application of the Direct and Indirect strategies is essential in business writing and demonstrates your focus on the reader's engagement and interests.

Use the Document Design to Inform

The physical design, layout, and spacing, of your document can be used to help the audience make sense of your document. Avoid large blocks of text as they can discourage reading and encourage scanning. White space is an important part of writing: use a line space after paragraphs and headings.

Headings

Heading are used to simplify the writing and reading of material. When drafting a piece of writing, you can use headings to help organize the information you have collected and need to communicate. Readers appreciate clear headings that allow them to skim to what material is most important and relevant for their purpose. There are two main styles of headings : Functional and Descriptive. It is important to be consistent when choosing a heading style to make it easier for the reader.

Functional headings are used to describe the purpose of that section of writing. For example, **Introduction**, **Discussion**, or **Conclusion** clearly identify the following material's purpose.

Descriptive or talkative headings provide the reader with a specific idea as to the type of information that will be found in the section. **Dyson's Superior Mechanics**, **Client Response**, **Next Steps**, are example of descriptive headings which give the reader a clearer idea of the content to follow. Talkative headings will often use action words or verbs. Consistency in verb tense – all in the present tense, or all in the past, or future – is another way of increasing the readability through parallel structure.

Attention Line

After the receiver's address block, you sometimes find "Attention:". When there is no person specified in the receiver's address block, you can include "Attention:" with either a person's name and title or the position for which your message is designed.

Subject or Re:

A subject line or Re: (short for "Regarding") is used as a heading: short description of the information that follows. Most frequently used in memos and emails, you need to keep this line short and clear: 5-12 words. This may be what the reader uses to determine when it is necessary to read the document or email.

Make it easy on yourself as a writer and write the Subject or Re: line last. It is very hard to describe a piece of writing you have yet to write.

Page Numbers

When creating a document with more than one page, make sure to include page numbers. Traditionally found at the top right hand corner, follow your organization's format for placement, and be consistent with number placement. It's not a bad idea to include the total number of pages as well; for example, 2 of 3, 3 of 3, etc. so the recipient can make sure they have all the pages and in the correct order.

Emails

Emails are in a grey zone: while it may not end up on 'paper', email writing should still follow the principles of professional business writing.

Emails are not texts and should not be written with text tone and language. Unfortunately, because many of us access emails through the same device as our emails, there may be a tendency to use the less formal approach when writing an email on your phone. Try to avoid this because you may leave an accidental impression of informality or worse, that you don't care.

Format for emails is based on the paper memo and fortunately, email programs generate the format automatically.

TO: When creating an email, your system either selects from established contacts or you create a new one. Make sure to check the address is correct before entering the information and to check again before sending.

CC: Stands for "Carbon Copy" which lets the intended receiver (TO:) know who else is getting a copy of the communication.

BCC: This means "Blind Carbon Copy" and is used to provide a copy of the mail to others *without* letting the intended receiver know another person is also receiving it. This is a good option to use when sending to several people where you don't wish to show who else is receiving the information. It is also means that the people receiving the copy don't see the email addresses of the others in a BCC. That respects the privacy of the others and is an important tool for professional communications.

When addressing or replying to an email, remember, to respect the recipient's (s') time. Ask yourself the important channel questions and if you should call the person instead. Does everyone on the "TO" need to see your reply? Avoid using Reply All unless necessary. Be respectful with people's email addresses too and don't share them carelessly.

Make sure your emails professional and respectful of the receiver: that way your emails are the ones read first.

Sometimes it is necessary to **share documents**. Before you click send, check if there's an attachment that should be there. Many programs do this automatically; however, develop the habit to check yourself. Also make sure the document you send is in a format the receiver can open. PC and Mac integration is getting better; however, some files still don't share easily across platforms. The same is true for video files. Whatever you are sending should not make the receiver track down a new program or contact you to request a re-send. Be respectful of the receiver's time: you will find your communication gets action faster.

The writing structure for email is more formal than text messages. Follow the three-part structure of introduction, body, and conclusion and make sure to use paragraphs. It it easier for the reader to scan and find the information they need. Email tends to get a brief scan to determine when it should be read (now or later), so use the text structure clues available to make your information easy to access.

The introduction needs a clear, simple **purpose statement** or brief description of what you hope the reader will do.

Short body paragraphs should provide **relevant materials**, connections, and benefits and be organized how the reader needs the information.

Your conclusion includes your respect and clearly states the action you need, with a **deadline** when necessary.

Use **bold** and *italics* to draw attention to the most important elements. Avoid underlining as it can make the text look crowded, or "dirty' and not easy to read. Remember how you feel when you are faced with huge blocks of text: avoid padding your writing to make the content more appealing and accessible.

Email Management

Emails can be dictators in the time management of your life. Here are a few suggestions to help you take control of emails and establish some principles to effectively deal with electronic messages.

1. **Time**. Set aside specific times in your day to check your email and plan your responses. Three or four specific times (morning, lunch, late afternoon, and maybe in the evening), help give you control. This is the first step in using email effectively rather than letting email use you.
2. **Scan.** Read over the list of emails that have arrived before you start selecting and reading items. This allows you to check if there are multiple emails from the same person or on the same topic and keeps you informed before you reply to one that is resolved or provides additional information later.
3. **Read**. It may seem overly simple but most of us don't read to understand, we scan and respond emotionally. When you set aside specific time to deal with emails, it allows you to take the time you need to read and understand the message and request.
4. **Draft**. Follow the document principles and strategies. Plan, draft, and revise. If it's an emotional situation, try to wait 24 hours before responding.
5. **Review & revise.** Remember, humour and sarcasm are very difficult to communicate in writing. What you may find funny or obvious may not be clear to your reader. Ask yourself if it adds to the purpose or distracts your meaning. Stick with clear and unfunny every time. Proof read: correct grammar and spelling errors. While you may think it's clear, the recipient isn't in your head. If you don't want to leave it to chance – or the reader's interpretation – double check your sentence structure, word choice, and spelling. Use punctuation carefully: avoid overuse of the exclamation mark!!!!!
6. **Verify.** Make sure you are sending your email, or your response, to only the people who need to see it. Do you need to keep a copy? Should you use BCC for the addresses? Is there an attachment required?
7. **Send**.

Memos

Memos are sent between people within the same organization. There is no sender or receiver address block. You will find much of the memo similar in writing structure to that of the email: in many cases, emails have taken the place of memos. As online work increases, it is even more the case in the 2020s.

Situations that still require a paper memo are determined by the information, purpose, and audience. You may receive a memo from your employer confirming your salary, vacation time, or performance review. You may send a memo to inform everyone in your work group about a corporate event or recent seminar experience.

Memos are as short or long as the person writing them decides is necessary. If a paper document needs more than one page, use page numbers. If there are attachments, list what is included: it is easier for you to put the materials together and the receiver to check they have everything.

Short internal reports (eight pages or less) are usually delivered in memo format.

Memo writing follows the usual three part structure and utilizes the Direct and Indirect strategies approach for delivering information.

Memos, unlike emails, do not have a salutation (Dear…:) and you don't include a signature block (Sincerely, *your name*).

Sample memo format

MEMO

To:

From:

CC:

Date:

Re:

A full sample memo format is in Appendix B. Memo Format

Letters

Letters are external documents from one person to another outside of the company, or group. Letter writing is a lost art and part of the courtesy and goodwill that can foster solid personal and professional relationships. Most people prefer email or text for the speed of being able to request, resolve, and respond immediately. However, letters are still useful in a number of situations. Take the time to craft a letter well: most organizations know that only one in a hundred sends an email and one in a thousand take the time to write a letter.

Follow the three-part structure principle (Introduction, Body, Conclusion) and after conducting an audience analysis, chose a Direct or Indirect strategy (see Chapter 5).

Informal reports delivered to or received from people outside of your organization frequently use the letter format.

Most companies or organizations have their own word processing template for creating letters. There are slight variations in punctuation after the salutation or whether or not to indent the first line of a paragraph. Many businesses follow the Block format (justified to the left side with no indentation on the first line of paragraphs) with Closed Punctuation (a colon after the salutation).

Sample letter format

Sender's Name, Title, and Address

Date (Month Day, Year – October 29, 2021)

Receiver's Name, Title, and Address

Salutation (Dear Mr./Ms. Pseudonym):

You will find a sample of the Block Closed Punctuation letter format in Appendix B. Letter Format

Reports

Reports cover a variety of subject areas and come in different formats. Your resume is a report outlining your skills, how you developed them, and where you used them. Progress reports, performance reviews, business plans, annual reports, recommendation reports, and even a pros versus cons list are essential tools when making personal or professional decisions.

While there are many different types, there are some key similarities in style:

- audience focus
- clear purpose
- accessible facts
- headings
- objective language

As always, the organization of the material must be in the audience interest and have a clear purpose. Reports, like any other communication, can be in either the Direct or Indirect strategy.

Accessible facts refers to how the information is presented. Think of the power of visuals (Create: Chapter 3) when including statistics to make the material easier to understand and apply. Remember, whenever research or material other than your own is used in communication, it is essential you document where you found the original information using in-text citations and References in the **IEEE format** (Information Literacy: Chapter 6).

Headings for your information are a great tool for the audience (and the writer) as they provide guidance on content location.

Objective language requires the writer to step outside personal preferences and become a reporter of events rather than provide an interpretation or evaluation. It's the difference between stating a fact: "There are 10 chocolate chips in a cookie," and providing a personal opinion or judgement: "There were tons of chocolate chips in that cookie." If you aren't sure if you are being objective, check your word choice (Word Choice: Chapter 20).

Informal or Formal, External or Internal

Informal or Formal reports are decided by the length or number of pages in the report. A general rule of thumb is eight (8) pages or less qualifies as an Informal Report. *Informal Reports* may still have a summary or abstract, and a References page when outside materials are used. A *Formal Report* usually contains a cover page, a Table of Contents, an Abstract or Executive Summary, then the body of the report divided with appropriate headings, and a Conclusion, followed by a References, and Appendix or Appendices, and perhaps a glossary and/or index

External reports are those that are written by people outside an organization or delivered to those outside of the business or company. *Internal* Reports are those generated by people working within the organization and if short enough (eight pages or less), can frequently be in a memo format.

Form Reports

Accident or *Incident Reports* are most frequently completed online. It is essential you provide an account of what you witnessed. You provide an first-hand account of what you saw, not what you heard happened from someone else, and not what you think happened. It must be what you saw: if you didn't see it yourself, do not include it. You are taking a verbal snapshot of the event so it includes only your perspective.

Be as specific as possible. Describe the event by using identifying terms such as left, right, front, back, and be clear.

Prepare to write an Accident or Incident Report by making notes as soon as possible after the event and before 12 hours have passed. Your memory starts to forget or fill in the blanks quickly. Think in terms of who, what, when, where. Who did what? When did things happen and in what order? The goal is to think about and report the details, not the reasons (why).

If you have to complete a paper copy form, draft your entries first and then complete the form in ink. Pencil is traditionally not used because entries could be erased and replaced. Changes to text in the form should be made only by the person submitting the form. When a change is made, place your initials next to the change to indicate you made the amendment.

These are legal documents and accurate spelling is important so there is no confusion about what your words. Proofread carefully before submitting.

Field or Site Report

The *Field* or *Site Report* provides the audience an opportunity to witness an event or visit a location (usually without an incident). Where the *Accident or Incident Report* attempts to capture everything, a *Field or Site Report* goes into the experience with a specific list to 'report' upon. The areas to examine should be established prior to the visit. That allows the person completing the report to focus on the task rather than trying to complete everything at once. Creating a checklist prior to the visit is also valuable as it can prevent forgetting to review an element requested.

Following the standard three part approach (Introduction, Body, and Conclusion), the essential parts of the *Field or Site Report* introduction include a clear purpose for the report and the day, time, and specific location involved. This can be a report of a seminar, or procedure, or even the first look at a potential business site.

There is traditionally a second introductory paragraph where the criteria or factors to be examined are identified. Sometimes that can include a description of how the criteria was developed or why those elements are important to the report's purpose.

Objective language is essential for the *Field or Site Report* as the writer's role is not to provide a personal opinion, unless requested. When an evaluation is included, it is frequently listed under a sub-heading to make sure it is clear that it is an opinion.

The Conclusion in this type of report is a valid place to include any general personal evaluations. Next steps, if there are any, and follow-up can be important to include as it demonstrates the importance of the information and how it can be used.

At the end of any report, on a separate page, will be the References (IEEE format).

Recommendation Report

Building on the objectivity of the *Site/Field Report*, a *Recommendation Report* is designed to use the criteria for an evaluation. This can be as simple as a Pros versus Cons exercise and can be as complicated as the purpose it identifies. The goal of this report is to provide objective analysis of elements and make recommendations based on the purpose defined in the introduction.

Recommendation Reports can be the result of long or short term projects deciding upon capital expenses such as hardware, furniture, products, or other high-cost and essential items. It is a way for organizations to conduct an objective evaluation and provides guidance in the decision making process.

The report is laid out in the standard three parts (Introduction, Body, Conclusion) with variations in how the data is reported and analyzed in the Body.

A clear purpose or objective is included in the ***Introduction*** followed by an explanation of the process and criteria used for the report. These need to be clearly established as it forms the basis for the report. Sometimes it is necessary to explain how and why the criteria was developed, and the steps of the process along with the time-frame. The final part of the introduction elements is the identification of the options being examined. It is a good opportunity to double check the items belong in the same category. Separate paragraphs for each introductory element enables you to keep the content separate and clear for the reader.

When it comes to the ***Body*** of the report, two main organization methods can be used to discuss the options and each can be enhanced with visuals such as tables and charts to make the data more accessible.

Point-by-Point method of development focuses on the criteria used for each discussion. The *Block* method focuses on the products or items and reports on the product and how it meets the criteria. Each of these methods can be presented in table of chart format where the use of point-form writing is acceptable. You may find it useful to provide a weight to the evaluation criteria – numerical or otherwise – to indicate the importance of each. This will also assist in creating and explaining the recommendation.

After the objective presentation of the data, the analysis or ***Recommendation*** follows. Drawing on the material discussed, the Recommendation explains which option is best and why.

A separate ***Conclusion*** can provide direction for the next steps to enact the recommendation, and usually includes time frames and and action plan. In large reports, this will appear as a separate paragraph.

Progress Report

Any time you are asked to reflect on a goal, the work completed (or not) towards completing that goal, and the work remaining (including any actions necessary to correct problems), you are completing a *Progress Report*. Unofficially, we do this internally when we check our progress on our New Year's resolutions. In the workplace, this is a performance review, or how your team stays on track to complete a project.

Part of the *introduction* of a Progress Report will include a clear description of the project or end goal, perhaps with identification of key dates for either follow-ups or check-ins.

Within the body of the report, you will find the material divided into *current status*, *yet to be completed*, and *problems and corrective measures*. Utilize your objective language skills to report on where things are, where they are going, and any potential difficulties. An important feature of the Progress Report is the identification of problems – real or potential – and developing actions to correct or adapt to the situation. It takes problem solving and creative thinking and demonstrates to the reader, your ability to do both.

Whether you are writing an email or report, a letter or a text, identify your purpose and audience to be focused and clear. Develop a reputation for that, and your writing will be read.

Chapter 7 Check-out:

- Document Design: Formats for Emails, Memos, Letters, and Reports
- Email Management tips
- Reports:
    - Formal and Informal
    - Forms, Field/Site, Recommendation, and Progress

How does structure in your document make it easier for you to write and the reader to find information?

References

Chapter 6: Information Literacy, IEEE Format, *Communicate with Style: A Handbook*

8. Online

Chapter 8 Check-in:

- Visuals in communications
- Flow, Balance, Margins, Space
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Writing for online reading is a relationship with a goldfish. You have 9 seconds to make an impression that will attract, hold, and influence.

Audience analysis is, as always, the first and most important step.

The online audience scans pictures, layout, and text to quickly decide what to read and when to move on. As a writer of online content, your goal is to connect with the reader, not prove how smart you are. Build your knowledge of who is reading and what they like so you can write for them.

While this is not sales, it doesn't hurt to remember marketing advice.

> "The job of a marketer is to attract attention, capture attention, and maintain attention long enough to communicate a message that is meaningful and memorable with the hope that the message with change the attitudes and/or actions of the audience."
>
> – Anthony Miyazaki, *The Marketing Minute, episode 124 [1]*

Visuals, layout, content, and style are deciding factors for people to stay on a site. Follow these guidelines to build your online presence and reputation.

Visuals

What attracts people visually is incredibly personal and while it is important to make sure your images are appropriate to your content, and purpose, there are no "rules" about which colours and what sizes as these can all be manipulated by the viewer. Visuals come in a variety of types from photos to line drawing, embedded visuals to explanatory charts or tables.

When thinking about what kind of visuals to use, remember the principle **PICS**: Personal, Inform, Clarify, Simple (Chapter 3). Good choices are those of experts or celebrities to illustrate or provide endorsements. To show improvements or results, use before and after shots. Illustrate techniques or how-to with numbered step by step photographs. A picture is worth a thousand words and the wrong picture can be worse than a short story turned novel.

Videos can also be used to enhance your web presence in a blog or post. While it's best to use your own original work, sometimes you find the perfect video created by someone else, or you don't have the time or expertise to create your own.

- Creative Commons or Fair Use
- Relevant & Brief
- Focused
- Accessible

First, make sure it it Creative Commons or Fair Use: do not assume something on YouTube or TikTok is open source and available for your use. Second, make sure the video stays on your subject. You want short, relevant material that adds to your information, and not something that takes over. Third, check the background or setting is clear; uncluttered backgrounds allow viewers to focus on the action or instruction. Fourth, review the accessibility of the video: headings and closed caption options, with language options, can make videos more accessible for everyone. As with everything, ask yourself if it makes your message clearer for the audience. If not, leave it out.

Other visual aids such as graphics, drawings, charts, tables, and anything you choose to insert follow the same basic rule: does it make your content easier to understand?

Finally, **ALWAYS** cite your source. You will be forgiven if you are missing a period or comma in formal IEEE structure (Chapter 3) but to leave a citation and reference out completely puts your reputation and credibility at risk.

Layout

Unless you have studied Art and Design, or have expertise in the graphic arts field, you are probably not an exert at using text and images to create a perfect visual piece. There are, however, some simple points you can follow that will help you create a pleasing look.

- Flow
- Balance
- Margins
- Space

Think about the various parts of your page as "blocks". The text and images within those blocks direct how your eye looks at the full page. If you have movement in an image, the eye follows that **flow**. An arm pointing to the right means your eyes go to the right, and if that leads the viewer off the page or site, then you have just directed your viewer away from your message. Flow can also be achieved with the size and shape of text blocks. If you start a page with a long paragraph, it makes it more difficult for the reader to climb that wall and read on. Aim for short simple paragraphs. Check the flow of the material on your page and aim to keep the eyes on target.

You use **balance** and symmetry to create a feeling and draw attention to items. Balance refers to where items – either text or images – are placed on the page in relation to other items on the page because each piece has a visual weight. You can be symmetrical – with weight equally distributed side to side and top to bottom, or you can be asymmetrical with an emphasis in more text or images on one side than another. This can also be achieved with text blocks or sidebars that run along the sides of your page as well.

The spacing between paragraphs or images is the **margin**. Be consistent with your margin width and length to encourage focus on the material. You can also use the margins to encourage flow.

Your page does not have to be crammed with images and text: **space** is your friend. Use the backdrop of your page to encourage attention to your content. Keep it uncluttered.

These elements work together to create your visual style. There are many layout examples available online from Pintrest to Canva. It is important to choose what suits you best and reflects your style. Spend time to create what works best for you.

Content

How you develop your writing has been covered in Module 1 and those principles apply for every type of writing and communication. Understand your audience and their needs and wants. You use that to organize your information. When writing for online reading, it is even more important to focus on your reader because there are so many options the reader can choose. Communicate your content and keep your reader with assistance from the set up.

- Consistent Headings
- Short paragraphs

Use your **headings** to make it easy for your reader to find the information they need. Short headings or headlines are ideal and be consistent with your style. Try headlines like a newspaper. You can also use a step numbering process when providing instructions. Questions are good clues for the reader to lead them into content sections. You may also want to try Problem and Solution pairings. Be consistent with the style of your headings so you don't unintentionally lose the reader with heading diversity.

Keep your **paragraphs** short and to the point. Aim for a paragraph of three to four sentences with one main point per paragraph. Shorter with clear, specific wording is always better.

Style

Which brings us to your writing style for online. It is best to use **conversational** style with **common language** to be most accessible. Try to avoid technical terms, unless you know your audience will understand them. If you do have to use technical language, make sure to explain the word clearly with an analogy that you know the audience will understand. Avoid 'talking down' to your audience. It's a fast way to ensure they will click away from your site. Using sentences of **different lengths** will also keep an audience interested.

Asking **questions** is a popular method of keeping the audience engaged. It can encourage the reader to take on the role of the person asking the questions and guides them to the answer and information you want to deliver.

You job is to create and maintain that connection with the reader.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Perhaps the single most important part of any online communication: SEO. This is where you tag and describe the material you have posted. Take control of your work and do the tagging yourself. Be clear, simple, and specific.

Chapter Check-out:

- Maximize impact with visuals
- Flow, Balance, Margins, Space

- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

What do the images I choose tell my audience about me? About my style?

How can I maximize that impact?

Resources for further information

Friedman, Jane. (2012). Five keys to writing for an online audience. *The Writer un-Boxed.* https://writerunboxed.com/2012/02/24/5-keys-to-writing-for-an-online-audience/

Munday, Rob. (2016). Writing for the Web. *Medium.* https://medium.com/journalism-tips/writing-for-the-web-36ca36e3b50b

References

[1] Anthony Miyazaki, the Marketing Minute, (2019) episode 124: Attention span of a goldfish (customer insights/analytics). [Online] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cv1OS8pjvps

Media Attributions

- goldfish

9. Face to Face: Personal & Presentations

Chapter 9 Check-in:

- Audience, Content, Support, & Practice
- PowerPoints and Hand-outs
- Delivery: Verbal and non-verbal
- Special Circumstances: groups and videos

Oral communications takes many forms from informal conversations between two people to a job interview with two or three people to formal presentations for an auditorium audience. The foundations are always the same: identify your audience; know your content; provide support for your material; and practice your delivery.

Audience

This is always the first step. Who are you speaking to? Sketch out in your mind the person or type of persons likely to be present with you in an oral communication situation. This understanding of your audience enables you to determine the structure, wording, and content that you need to use to make sure you message is clear and understood. Start with the basic information of demographics, and build up the audience profile with what they know, and what they need to know about the topic.

Content

Your content should always be tailored to your audience. Oral communications, whether in person or online, are best if you can provide a direct link for the audience as to why the topic is important. Matt Abrahams' suggests a three-prong approach: What, So What, Now What? (2018). It's a clear approach to make that connection with the audience: make it relevant and useful.

Plan out your content carefully.

Your introduction must identify your topic, why it is important, who you are, and your expertise in the area. At this initial contact stage you may find it helpful for both you and your audience to provide a brief overview of the path your content will take. The more sign-posts or verbal headings you can provide to an audience, the easier it is to make sure they stay on the path with you.

When developing the content of your material for a presentation, it helps to pick a theme or image that represents the development or journey of the information. Use an image or analogy that can carry you and your audience through as you outline the points. For example, you can use the image of a mountain trek and the main points are stages of the trip: base of the mountain, stage one in the trees, stage two on the rocks stage three at the top, stage four the journey back to base camp.

Your conclusion needs to provide the listener a clear and brief summary of your topic, and main points of development, with a connection or call to action for the listener. Sometimes that can be in the form of a question such as at the end of a job interview when you ask what professional development opportunities there are for employees, or a statement of hope for working together to contribute your skills in the location.

When writing out your content, avoid writing full sentences and stick to point form development of your material. Writing full sentences leads your brain to rely on specific phrases and language and if you forget part of the phrase, it can lead you to a cliff's edge. Points (with examples) are easier to remember and you are less likely to rely on a script.

Support Matter

You are the most important part of a presentation. Do not minimize your importance or message by diminishing your presence. Support material – props, videos, or power points – should only enhance the experience, not take it over.

Props need to be relevant to your topic and have a clear purpose. When completing a training, props are useful tools to demonstrate "how to". In situations with small groups, provide a prop for each participant in order to encourage engagement and to help the audience members understand and replicate the instructions. In larger group situations, or online videos, encourage viewers to imagine or find their own prop to replicate the instructions.

Videos in presentations should be used sparingly as you may accidentally encourage the audience to be more interested in something other than you – unless it is a video you created. Ask yourself "Does it make my point clearer?" Easier for you does not equal easier for the audience.

PowerPoints, or slides, are very popular and can be helpful in presentations. David J.P. Phillips' excellent TEDx talk on How to Avoid Death by PowerPoint (2014), provides five "rules". Here's a quick summary of those points (Spoiler alert). Throw away the templates: use dark backgrounds to make it easier on the audience's eyes and to keep the focus on you. Use contract (shading and colour) to direct the focus. Reduce the size of the headings because the important information is in the body. Use points not full sentences: your audience will ignore you and read if given the chance. Focus on one main point per slide with no more than six items of support to increase audience attention and retention of information. You are the important part of the presentation – not the PowerPoint – so make sure the focus remains on you.

Handouts and Takeaways can be useful tools to direct your audience and provide a quick reference to the material you covered in your presentation. Try not to add any information you don't cover in your presentation.

Styles that you may want to consider include a highlights or point-form of main points, a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions), Fill in the Blanks quiz style, or Crossword. The intent is to provide an opportunity to engage with the information in more than a passive reception manner. When the audience engages, there is a better opportunity for retaining the content.

Visuals, layouts, and anything else that attracts and holds attention are good ways to involve your listeners.

Delivery

Few things can inspire as much fear as being told you have to make a presentation. Your palms sweat and your mouth dries up: your body appears to betray you. Understand your strong points, and the key elements of delivery, and with a little practice, you can make it through the event with respect.

Toastmasters is an international organization that provides members opportunities to practice public speaking. They have also produced excellent resources such as Your Speaking Voice: Tips for Adding Strength and Authority to Your Voice (2021).

Verbal

Remember three things about your voice: modulation, pace, and volume.

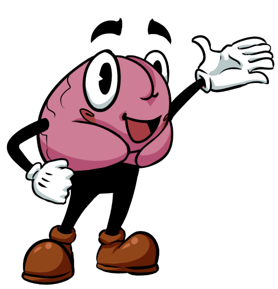
Modulation is the up and down tone of your voice that communicates enthusiasm and interest in the event and subject. Traditionally, your voice should descend a tone at the end of a sentence or point to indicate the conclusion. When you use a higher tone at the end of a sentence, it indicates a question. Don't do that unless it really is a question. If you read a script or from your notes, it tends to flatten your voice as your brain focuses on the words and pronunciation. Reading means you lose your modulation which makes it sound like you are not interested. Use points instead of sentences to keep fresh.

Pace refers to how quickly you speak, and where and why your pauses occur. Speaking too quickly will have your listeners unable to follow you. Speaking too slowly may make your audience (and you) uncomfortable. Pause between slide changes, and before important points. When learning to drive you were taught a formal stop means the car stops moving and you count to three: try a count of two between slides or point shifts. It is common for the nervous fast talk at the beginning of an event so practice your introduction – including saying your name clearly and evenly, until you are comfortable. That helps you get through the initial nerves and on to your familiar content ground.

Volume may be self-explanatory but we don't always realize how loudly or softly we speak. Find a comfortable 'normal' volume range for yourself based on the room, whether or not you are using a microphone, or if you are in a small group. You can emphasize points with volume easily though avoid the blasting a conversation partner's face with the strength of your opinion.

Your diaphragm – the muscle below you lungs – controls much of your voice. You control how much space that muscle has to operate by your posture: stand tall with shoulders back and you increase the space, and your ability to generate greater control over your modulation, pace, and volume.

Your voice is a powerful tool for your presentation. Take care of it. Avoid drinking too cold or too hot fluids before speaking. Avoid shouting as well especially 24 hours before your speaking event.



Non-Verbal

A picture is worth a thousand words and what you look like has an impact on how you are received. There are many resources you can find that list a variety of points regarding your body language, and these can break down into three specific areas: **posture**, **hands**, and **face**.

Your stance or **posture** helps you feel comfortable and increases your breathing abilities. Whether a short talk of five minutes or a longer one hour formal presentation, the ability to keep your chest open, and shoulders back starts with your legs. Practice standing with your feet shoulder width apart and maintain a slight bend to the knees so they are not 'locked' in place as that gets very uncomfortable. The more open your body remains, the more it is easy for the audience to trust you (watch Mark Bowden's excellent video The Importance of Being Inauthentic, TEDx Toronto in 2013).

What to do with your **hands**? Grasping your waist makes you look like a super-hero and while good preparation for confidence, not the best use of your hands in a presentation. Sticking them in your pockets can also have ill consequences (check the video Make Body Language Your Superpower). Two important activities can help your hands stay active: keep the palms towards your audience and use them to match your points. Avoid raising your hands above waist level unless you demonstrating and reinforcing a point. Avoid finger jabbing and palm down smoothing. Practice gestures to match your content (increases equal rising hand gestures).

Just like your hands, your **face** reflects your content and interest. Use your eyes, eyebrows, and smile to engage with the audience and increase their engagement with you. In a large group, pick a couple of people to look at around the room and make a regular scan. One-on-one, make eye contact but not without regular breaks (you don't want to send the wrong signals).

The last word: practice.

Special Circumstances

Group work and presentations are always a challenge. Make sure everyone has a role and participates. When introducing the topic, ensure each team member and their section is identified. Assign someone the clicker role for the presentation support material or use the clicker as a baton and pass from one speaker to another as the material progresses. Make sure to say each other's names and content area when passing to the next speaker and they in turn need to thank the speaker before them for (name the content). At the end, thank the audience and each speaker: stepping forward at your point is also good form.

Video presentations, especially when completed in the comfort of your home/home office, deserve a special mention in presentations. Consider your *surroundings* before you press record: turn your camera on and look around you. What is the viewer going to see? Is it the image you want to project? Tidy up for the camera and the audience so the focus can be on you. Check your *lighting*. Make sure you have light in front of you and block out or diffuse any light behind you (pull the curtains on windows) so you aren't backlit because it will make your facial features black out. *Posture* is equally important online. Center yourself in the screen and avoid the background distractions (check for mirrors that may reveal too much). Make *eye contact* with the camera, not your audience's image.

Chapter 9 Check-out:

- Audience, Content, Support, & Practice
- PowerPoints and Hand-outs
- Delivery: Verbal and non-verbal

- Special Circumstances: groups and videos

How can you make sure you put your best face forward in a presentation?

What did you like about the last presentation you did? How can you improve your content, delivery, or feedback?

Resources

Abrahams, Matt. (2018). *The Master Communicator's Toolbox*. Stanford Graduate School of Business. [Online] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXtlXCrmqR4

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Dingwall, R., Labrie, Chuck, McLennon, Trecia, and Underwood, Laurie. (2017). Adapted by Niagara College 2018, Updated 2021. *Professional Communications*. Open Education Resource (OER), eCampus Ontario. [Online] https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/profcommsontario/

Media Attributions

- brain Storm © Luc Grenier
- Brain Wave [L] © Luc Grenier

SECTION III

STYLE

10. What is Style?

Chapter 10 Check-in:

- Four Communication Styles:
  - Analytical
  - Intuitive
  - Functional
  - Personal

What is Style?

Most people recognize that style – in clothing, hair, accessories – is how you express your personality. Your communication style – how you speak, listen, write, and use your body language – is another way you demonstrate your personal style.

Make sure your appearance and communication styles are consistent.

There are as many labels for communication style as there are for *couture*, and understanding the elements is a good start to recognize, and own your style, and develop your brand.

There is no 'wrong' style. The goal is to recognize your style, and that of the person with whom you are speaking so you can minimize the differences.

The goal, as always, is to increase the connection with another person. You don't have to change your style to recognize someone else's. When you understand why someone chooses to communicate verbally in a specific manner, it will make it easier for you to respond in a way that is easier for the person to understand.

Any number of internet searches can bring you a variety of definitions and types. For our purpose, we are going to examine Mark Murphy's four Communication Styles as described in Leadership IQ. There is a simple and free quiz to get you started.

The four 'types' identified by Leadership IQ are based on how someone interacts with facts and how emotion is represented.

Analytical style communicators value hard data and frequently lead with the facts. While they may seem cold and unfeeling, the reality is they are essential to evaluate a project without emotion. Technical competency is important for analytical communicators. These individuals value precision and need exact figures and accountability.

Intuitive communicators start with the end in mind and are big picture thinkers and talkers. They have the ability to see beyond the details to the end goal. However, they may not be best at working out the finer details of a plan and may be frustrated when tackling day-to-day tasks. They are motivators and goal oriented.

Functional communicators are about the process and timelines. "To Do" lists thrill a functional communicator. These are the people you want on your team to make sure everything is done, they may lose the rest of the team's attention by the desire to review all parts of the plan. Invaluable for making sure everything is done properly, there may be a tendency to lose sight of the overall objective. They can keep a plan on track.

Personal communicators are about the relationship and emotion. These good listeners build connections with others and focus on the "who" in how something happens. Sometimes called the "mom" in the group, keeping everyone together is the priority for personal communicators. Sometimes others may find the 'touchy feeling' emotion distracting from the purpose. Personal communicators can make sure everyone in the group has a chance to contribute and feels valuable.

Example: When discussing the success of a vacation, Analytical style people may focus on the value for their vacation dollar, such as how many events/activities they were able to do in a set period of time or at reasonable prices. However, someone with a Personal style of communication might speak more about the people they met, or the experiences that brought them an understanding of the area they visited or the people with whom they were travelling.

Your verbal communication style is part of your personal brand. It is your responsibility to make sure your style and brand communicate the same message. This isn't a one-time task but is accomplished through self-reflection and regular checks on your personal and professional progress. Some people reflect through keeping a journal, others may be fortunate to have a mentor or friend to provide check-ins and check-ups.

Whatever method you choose, it is a valuable process.

Chapter 10 Check-out:

- Four Communication Styles
  - Analytical
  - Intuitive
  - Functional
  - Personal

What communication style reflects how you communicate?

How does that change based on the circumstances and audience?

Resources

Molly Bingaman. January 2021, The Link Between Personal Style and Identity, Tedx UMKC Talk. [Online] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQxI59BQC9Y

Steve Harvey. (2021). Developing Dialogue: How to establish your own brand communications strategy. Brand Fabrik. [Online] https://fabrikbrands.com/establish-your-brand-communications-strategy/

Celeste Headlee. March 2016. Ten Ways to Have a Better Conversation. Ted. [Online] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1vskiVDwl4

Mark Murphy. (2021). Communication Styles Quiz and Research. Leadership IQ: A Mark Murphy Company. [Online] https://www.leadershipiq.com/blogs/leadershipiq/39841409-quiz-whats-your-communication-style

11. Inclusivity and Diversity

Chapter 11 Check-in:

- Implicit Bias
- Brock University's Intercultural Awareness and Competency program

Inclusivity and Diversity

Understanding our communication style also requires self-reflection to recognize our own assumptions about other people and circumstances. Recognizing our built in and in many cases inherited biases is part of that process.

Many resources exist to help you reflect on your position and role in your personal and professional lives. Harvard University conducts ongoing implicit bias testing and you can access that here.

Brock University Intercultural Awareness and Competency program

Brock's Human Rights and Equity's (HRE) Intercultural Awareness and Competency program produced a three module Intercultural Awareness and Competence text. The goals of these online modules are to "foster and develop a culturally inclusive, diverse, and safe environment for all". You are encouraged to explore the text and resources. The personal reflections and mini-quizzes are not recorded and are intended for your use only.

Chapter 11 Check-out:

- Implicit Bias
- Brock University's Intercultural Awareness and Competency program

12. Reflection and Feedback

Chapter 12 Check-in:

- Reflection
  - DEAL
  - What, So What, Now What
- Feedback
  - Give and Receive

We've covered a lot of material around communicating with others. Communicating with yourself is equally important and reflection and feedback are essential to the process of personal learning and development.

Reflection

Professions where reflection is encouraged and incorporated into practice are largely academic and health care fields. However, anyone interested in how to progress in their lives – personally or professionally – can benefit from reflection.

Traditionally a private experience and activity, this kind of self-analysis is part of any performance review in an employment situation. This is more than a journal or diary of what happened; it is an opportunity to celebrate your growth and chart a path forward.

Types and Methods of Reflection

We conduct superficial reflection when we recount the events or describe an experience and stick to the details. This is strictly a narrative of the incident with little or no opinion or evaluation of the events prior, during, or after. These are useful records for accident reports, but don't qualify as reflective practice.

When you step back from an experience and contemplate your actions, your thinking process, and knowledge level, you are reflecting a little more deeply. This level finds you thinking about the process, and how you felt about the experience.

To dive deeply into reflection, you build on a recount of the event by including an exploration of how the incident shaped how you think about yourself or what you do, and the impact it has on your relationship with others.

Two **methods** of reflection can assist you in this process. Adapt the DEAL method (*Fundamentals of Reflective Practice*, n.d.), designed for critical thinking in an academic environment, and apply four steps: Describe, Examine, Apply to Learn. Identify and describe what happened then move on to examine the factors that contributed to the event both actual and attitudes. Use those elements to determine how you can apply the results of your reflection to learn from the experience.

Driscoll (2007) developed the "What, So What, Now What" approach for reflective practice (*Fundamentals of Reflective Practice*, n.d.) to streamline the process. Determine and describe the event, explore who was involved, how things unfolded and why, what that means to you, how you think and feel about the incident, and how you will approach similar situations and work. The "Now What" is an essential part of the strategy as it includes your plan for implementing an action for you to follow as a result of the experience.

That's reflective practice in action.

Feedback

Like reflection, feedback is a useful element to change course in your development. Unlike reflection, another person such as a colleague or supervisor provides feedback. Whether you are giving or receiving, particular skills are necessary to give and receive feedback effectively. First, you need to understand that type of feedback you are to provide: informal, formal, formative, summative.

Informal is usually verbal, light on detail or specifics, and is very brief. When a teacher tells you after class, "You did well on that presentation", that is an example of informal feedback. For it to be effective there must be a generous with time, private, motivating, moving forward, type of approach.

Like the name, **Formal** feedback is traditionally in writing so there is a record and it is usually part of a review process. It provides more detail and specific examples and an action plan or corrective measures with deadlines.

Shifting to a focus on the learning or development of a skill, we find **Formative** feedback. This kind of feedback is instructive and aims to provide direction for improvement. There may be no or minimal grade associated with this kind of feedback as it is meant to help in the development of your understanding and skill.

Summative feedback is that final review which is traditionally done with reference to a rubric or formal assessment.

Feedback usually follows one of three methods. There is the **Sandwich** approach where you start with something good, something that needs improvement, and something the reviewer appreciated. Another way of providing feedback is to review the action step-by-step in **Chronological** format. This can be very effective when it is necessary to find where something went wrong in either action or assumption.

The **Pendleton** method, developed in 1984, takes a four-step approach. After you verify the receiver wants the feedback, you use open-ended questions and reflection to reach conclusions. Ask first what went well. Move on to what could have been done differently. Ask the receiver to identify what could be improved. End the feedback with asking how – what actions – could be done to accomplish the improvements (Hardavella et al., 2017).

As with every communication situation, there are potential barriers to giving and receiving feedback.

Know your audience, context, and potential response to minimize those barriers. Feedback should be timely; soon after an incident or at regular intervals like an annual review or part of a training process. Feedback must be specific and clear. Feedback needs to be respectful of each participant personally and professionally. Private delivery of feedback demonstrates that respect, especially if corrective measures are necessary.

To Give

Make sure your feedback is well received by taking the time to plan. Plan the meeting in advance, so the recipient is ready to talk and has time to prepare as well. Ask open-ended questions to make the meeting participatory and listen to the answers. Keep your comments specific, clear and goal oriented. Limit the number of concerns or comments. Minimize blame language and focus on future actions. Listen to what the individuals says and what their body language says: do not continue if they are uncomfortable or distressed or have otherwise shut down.

To Receive

When receiving feedback the most important thing is to listen. It can be overwhelming to receive any kind of negative information about your performance. Ask open-ended questions to clarify comments. Ask for examples or specifics. Take time to reflect on the discussion: you don't have to respond immediately. It is also a good practice to be pro-active and request feedback.

Examples of how to give and receive feedback can be found in reality competition shows such as The Great British Baking Show, The Great Canadian Baking Show, and the glass-blowing competition Blown Away. The participants demonstrate how self-reflection and feedback help them improve their abilities for the next episode.

Chapter 12 Check-out:

- Why do it and how to reflect
  - DEAL
  - What, So What, Now What
- Feedback how to's
  - Give
  - Receive

When did you last reflect on your career path? What adjustments did you make to your plan?

What feedback have you received that inspired you to change something you do?

References and Resources

Essential Guide for Giving and Receiving Feedback. (n.d.) *Virtual Speech*. https://virtualspeech.com/blog/advice-for-giving-and-receiving-feedback

Fundamentals of reflective practice (reflective writing). (n.d.) *The Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre*. https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/sites/files/asc/public/shared/Fundamentals%20of%20Reflective%20Practice%20%28Reflective%20Writing%29.pdf

Hardavella, G., Aamli-Gaagnat, A., Saad, N., Rousalova, I., and Sreter, K.B. (December 2017). How to give and receive feedback effectively. *Breathe (Sheff)*. 13(4): 327-333. DOI; 10.1183/20734735.009917

Reflective Practice. (2022). Southern Cross University. https://libguides.scu.edu.au/reflectivepractice/types

Reflective Practices. (2022). Skills You Need: Helping You Develop Life Skills. https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/reflective-practice.html

13. Conflict Resolution and Problem Solving

Chapter 13 Check-in:

- Identify Conflict Causes and Effects
- Explore Conflict Approaches Solutions
- Basic Problem Solving Strategy PDCA

Like all communication, good conflict management and resolution requires your time: listen, reflect, and consider all elements of a situation and the people involved. It is not a simple process and there are some steps to help you navigate the process. In the end, it is about the relationship.

Conflict

Frequently considered a negative, conflict can actually be an opportunity for growth in relationship or work. Your attitude towards the situation and person plays a role in any outcome. Adam Grant, Professor of Psychology at The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and Saul P. Steinberg Professor of Management, notes that "The absence of conflict is not harmony, it's apathy. If you are in a group where people never disagree, the only way that could ever really happen is if the people don't care enough to speak their minds." (Grant, February 2021).

However, it is easy to feel at a loss in an immediate conflict situation. Here are some brief points to consider when faced with more than just a disagreement.

Conflict is emotional: it is much greater than a difference of opinions. It is usually an expression of not being heard, seen, valued or respected. It is based on a deeply person need and emotional response, based on perceptions which have identified a threat in any form. If conflict is ignored, it can fester and result in such entrenched opinions and sides that resolution appears impossible (Segal et al, 2020).

The first step is to determine what the actual problem is as perceived by all parties. The *Conflict Tree* analogy is especially useful if you respond well to visuals (O'Connor, 2020). It is an excellent activity for a group or individual to clarify the effects (branches), core problems (trunk), and even causes of the issue (roots).

Once the actual problem is identified, you can move on to tackling a resolution together.

Approaches to Conflict

There are generally five styles for approaching conflict (Benoliel, 2017) and understanding what they are and what style you lean towards, identifies how you will move through the process. These categories are determined by whether the focus is on the relationship or the end goal of a task/project. While these may be more specific to workplace conflicts, they certainly identify personal conflict responses as well.

Collaboration is marked by a balanced focus on the relationship with others and meeting long-term objectives. A **Competition** style is marked by individuals who are assertive and probably uncooperative who demonstrate that their priority is the outcome of the project more than the relationships. Although few people enjoy conflict, the **Avoidance** style focuses on the the immediate unpleasantness and therefore avoids the issues. This traditionally marks individuals who are unassertive and uncooperative largely because they assume it is safer to ignore than face an issue. Sometimes there are individuals who will do anything to please others: this **Accommodation** approach results in self-sacrifice and is usually the route taken by those who care more about the relationship than the outcome. Unfortunately, they are frequently taken advantage of in their efforts to please others. Lastly, there are those who prefer the **Compromise** strategy. This may seem expedient in the attempt to resolve the problem by aiming for mutually acceptable terms and concessions, it does frequently leaves no one side satisfied even though it allows most to maintain an assertive and cooperative stance.

Strategies for Solutions

Sometimes those involved in conflict turn to an third person for assistance to resolve a conflict. A mediator can listen to the perspectives of those in the dispute and focuses on helping each side hear the concerns and priorities of the other. Working with the individuals in conflict, a mediator aims to help them create a solution acceptable to both sides. Sometimes the third party is an Arbitrator whose role is to hear each side and provide a decision to resolve the dispute. In some cases the conflict results in the even more formal process of a trial.

There are four key skills you need to approach conflict resolution with or without a third party involved (Segal et al, 2020; Fighting Fair, n.d.).

Conflict can be a very stressful experience and your **Stress Management** is an essential first step. When we are stressed, we can't think clearly, we can't understand someone else's thoughts or feelings, and it makes communication very difficult. Use whatever method works best for you to manage your stress.

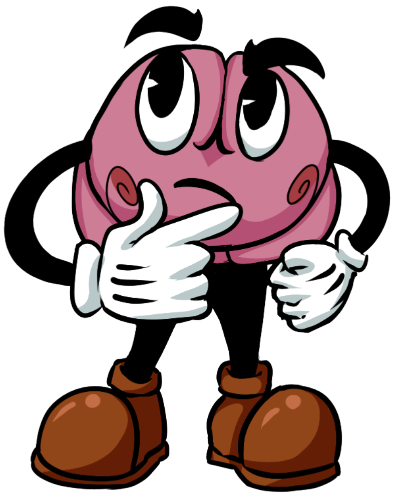
Once your stress is managed, it is easier to exert **Control over your Emotions.** Recognize the emotions you are experiencing to assist in your processing the experience without having a purely emotional response.

With your stress and emotions recognized and managed, it makes it easier to recognize and pay attention to the feelings you and the other people express and you can **Identify Non-Verbal Communication.** Much is said without words and body language is a good indication of how the other person feels towards the situation.

Respect each other is standard for every communication situation and essential to remember if you are in a position of conflict. Personal attacks, or drawing on personal knowledge, has no productive part in conflict resolution.

Many resources may explain the benefits of humour, but caution should be used. Sometimes an emotional situation is not the best time for humour as you can unintentionally be seen to diminish the importance another person places on the experience.

Work together to identify the problem by taking the time to see it from multiple perspectives. Be clear about the desired results and end goal. Think about the relationships and long term impacts that any course of action may have on all parties. It takes commitment to resolve a conflict.



Problem Solving

We covered Reflection and Feedback in Chapter 12 and these are essential steps for effective conflict resolution and problem solving. Even the Trial and Error process of problem solving relies on evaluating the success of an action before moving on to another attempt.

Many different approaches to problem solving exist though the basic core approach can be seen across geographic and language borders. The PDCA approach – Plan, Do, Check, Act – provides the basic four steps process that can be expanded to suit any profession or experience (Plan, Do, Check, Act, 2021).

Problem solving starts with a clear identification of problem. Then you need to clarify the desired end result. The development of a plan can be as short or as long as necessary. Once you have a plan, you have to implement it: Do. Check is your opportunity to evaluate the success of your plan and make any amendments necessary. Finally, Act: put your strategy into practice. An important point to remember is that the reflection and evaluation should be an ongoing part of the solution you implement.

Chapter 13 Check-out:

- Identify Conflict Causes and Effects
- Explore Conflict Approaches and Solutions
- Basic Problem Solving Strategy PDCA

Remember your last conflict with another person. How was it resolved? How would you like it to have been resolved? What could you have done to implement that change in result?

How do you usually approach problem solving? How successful has it been for you?

What, if anything, would you like to change about how you've problem solved in the past?

Resources and References

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Media Attributions

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SECTION IV

SCENARIOS AND EXERCISES

14. Scenarios

Professionals in the hair care industry contributed these scenarios based on real-life experiences. Use these as prompts for discussion, independent analysis (use the SHAPE sheet, Audience Analysis & Action sheet, and draft or role play potential responses), or as opportunities to practice your communication skills.

Thanks to the Focus Group members (2021) for the initial scenarios. Revision will take place on a yearly basis. Please email wward@niagaracollege.ca to submit recommendations.

1. Offer additional services to clients. For example, Deep Treatments. Explain the benefits, and do not make comments on other products the client used previously, or other stylists, or salons.
2. Explain price points to clientele. For example, adding toner after a lighting service, and explaining the importance of toning. That impactful consultation, the integrity of the hair is reviewed, helps to enhance tone, eliminates discoloration, strengthens etc.
3. Conflict with another stylist. For example, looking after a client that has been going to another stylist. Teamwork is important but being professional in front of the salon, and behind the chair is most important.
4. A client that does not explain well. For example, requesting a haircut over the ear is a big one, it can mean hair covering the ear, or right over the ear.
5. Client has unrealistic expectations of their hair (wanting to go from black to platinum blonde in one session).
6. Client agrees that their hair transformation will be a process but calls back after their appointment complaining they aren't bright or blonde enough despite being told they wouldn't be.
7. Client has a very strict budget and is not willing to compromise on their service.
8. Client is booked in for a certain service (e.g. root touch up) but when they sit in the chair suddenly expect to get more services done despite not being booked in for them.
9. Client sees a certain colour in their hair (e.g. yellow highlights) even when there isn't any issue.
10. Client is indecisive on what services they want done and cannot seem to decide on what they want done despite offering several suggestions.
11. Client complains that they only want a "trim" and therefore they don't feel they should be charged the full price for a haircut despite them being the same thing.
12. Client showing up late for their appointment but still expecting to get all of their services done despite missing a quarter or more of their appointment time.
13. Client brings in inspiration photos and insist on looking exactly like the photo despite their hair being a different texture or length or colour.
14. Client telling the stylist how their previous stylist coloured/cut/styled their hair and demands you do the same thing despite all stylists being different.
15. Wedding Day woes. The wedding party including the Mother of the Bride had taken over the salon, as is per usual. Because the MOB was the least challenging of the work, she was completed first. She then had the time to float around and challenge both the hairdressers and the bridal party.
    The girls obviously had seen this behavior and dealt with it, her daughter on the other hand was starting to unravel by her mom's picking. She was taking what should have been her daughter's day and creating a horrible time for her. Insulting her dress fitting, reception choices etc. Tensions between everyone are getting worse.
16. Children, unless it's a business set up for them, need supervision. There are situations in a salon environment that are just plain dangerous. As a result, our salon said no children unless they were there to have a hair-cut themselves and then the parents had to stay present. This happened after two boys, 5 and 7 years-old, were left for haircuts. The mother of these young boys brought them in and then left. The older boy fell asleep while he was getting his haircut; the younger one had quietly found a station with a comb and shears and started cutting his own hair. Of course, it was as you would expect – a disaster. The mother of the two returned with a couple of

shopping bags, and was shocked at the one child's hair.

17. The two-faced client. As a senior stylist, your support crew are super important.
The receptionist and the apprentices make the business of the salon run smoothly.
There are times when a client will come in and berate the staff then sit in your chair and behave like an angel. To ignore this behaviour is to disrespect your support staff.
18. A client books an appointment for a simple cut but when they arrive, they request a colour and a cut as well, but there isn't enough time booked. How do you handle the situation? Would you squeeze her in? Ask for help? Try to rebook the client for the colour? Describe what steps you would take in responding to this client.
19. A client asks for a drastic haircut, and once complete, is clearly devastated by the change and is crying in your chair. What can you say to calm her down and keep her happy so she re-books? Suggested Role-play situation.
20. Your client brings multiple photos to you to help illustrate the cut she wants, but they are all different and you are confused as to what she actually wants. List the questions you would ask the client and describe what listening techniques you would use such as paraphrasing.
21. Your client tells you the receptionist was rude to her when booking the appointment (or when paying the bill). How would you respond to the client and address the issue with the receptionist?
22. You have a very demanding and pushy client who insists on getting a new haircut and colour that you know will not suit them. a) What type of communication style is this? How would you best respond? b) How would you recommend something different without insulting them or upsetting them?
23. You have a client who is constantly complaining and never seems to be happy with the same haircut they come to you for every 6-8 weeks. a) What do you say when they complain? b) How would you tell them they can no longer be your client?
24. A client comes in with their young pre-teen and wants their hair bleached and dyed, even though they are quite young. Do you say anything, and if so, what would you say? Role play in a group of 3 – stylist, client, client's child. a) First scenario – the child is willing to have the change done. b) Second scenario – the child is clearly against the style, but the parent really wants it.

15. Exercises

Exercises

These exercises are designed to help you practice and develop writing strategy skills. You are encouraged to practice self-reflection and ask yourself open-ended questions: describe the event/experience, explore what your thinking/emotional response was, imagine what other kinds of results could have been achieved, contemplate what behaviours could have helped accomplish alternate outcomes.

1. Choose any of the scenarios from Chapter 14 and create a SHAPE analysis.
2. Choose any of the scenarios from Chapter 14 and create an Audience Analysis:
3. When choosing the Channel, or method of delivering your information, it is important to consider four factors (Chapter 2). Explain why that is and how the factors contribute to choosing a channel.
4. The Direct Strategy approach anticipates a positive response from the audience and places the reasons after the purpose or request. Identify a situation where the Indirect Strategy would be a better choice and create a point form draft, or a fully developed piece of writing. Check the scenarios for situations to use.
5. Draft a letter to different people requesting a donation to a community charity event.
6. Write a paragraph using objective language to describe a room where you live. Write another one using subjective language.
7. Evaluate a TikTok video to determine if it is reliable and provides accurate information. Find another site that does not provide accurate information. How were you able to tell the difference?
8. Paraphrase a paragraph from an online source. Make sure to use IEEE documentation style for the in-text citation and Reference entry.
9. Create a layout with four pictures with consistent internal margins that provides a circular flow of movement.
10. What purpose do Headings have in online articles? How can you use them effectively?
11. What body language would tell you the audience has stopped paying attention to what you are talking about? How could you regain their attention?
12. What are some voice techniques you can use to increase audience attention?
13. What are some questions you can ask yourself to reflect on your work?
14. What makes conflict situations so difficult to resolve? How do you start?
15. How do you determine what is a "problem" and what you can do about it?
16. Describe the details of a time when you received instructions from someone that were easy to understand and follow. What made it easy (verbal description, visual demonstration, practice, feedback from the instructor, etc.)?

SECTION V

WRITING MECHANICS - WHAT'S WRONG & HOW TO FIX IT

Resources

University of Ottawa Hypergrammar. (2021). https://arts.uottawa.ca/writingcentre/en/hypergrammar

University of Purdue, Online Writing Lab – OWL. (2021). https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/grammar/index.html

16. Sentence Problems & Fixes

Sentence Fixes

WENDY WARD

A sentence contains a noun (person, place or thing), a verb (action), and is a complete thought. A good sentence makes sense, is clear, and specific. When there is a problem with the sentence, the reader fills in the blanks and make their own meaning, which may not be what you meant.

Three ways your sentence can break down: Fragment, Run-on, and Comma Splice.

Fragment

Your sentence does not have a noun, either stated or implied; does not have action; is not a complete thought, either stated or implied. If it raises one or more questions – who, what happened, where – then revise to be clear what you mean.

Fragment: *Fix:*

Keziah goes. *Keziah goes shopping.*

Shut the door. (This is an imperative sentence with the subject – You – implied).

Paying the receptionist. *I am paying the receptionist.*

Run-on

A **Run-on** sentence combines two or more sentences without effectively joining the ideas or events. It results in lack of clarity and the reader decides how to make sense of the writing. There are three ways to join sentences.

1. Use a conjunction and comma to avoid confusion. Conjunctions are known by the acronym FANBOYS: For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So.
2. Use a semi-colon between the sentences when the second part explains the first more.
3. Use a colon between the sentences when the second part relates to the first part, and can stand on its own.

Run-on: *Most writers struggle with a couple of words or style points common problems include faulty sentence structure, out-of-place modifiers, and poor word choices.*

Fix 1: *Most writers struggle with a couple of words or style points. Common problems include faulty sentence structure, out-of-place modifiers, and poor word choices.*

Fix 2: *Most writers struggle with a couple of words or style points; common problems include faulty sentence structure, out-of-place modifiers, and poor word choices.*

Comma Splice

A **comma splice** joins two sentences with a comma but no conjunction. It does not make the connection complete.

Comma splice: *Hairstyling is a physically exhausting profession, most of the time I'm too tired to even wash my own hair after work.*

Fix 1: *Hairstyling is a physically exhausting profession, and most of the time I'm too tired to even wash my own hair after work.*

Fix 2: *Hairstyling is a physically exhausting profession; most of the time I'm too tired to even wash my own hair after work.*

Resources

University of Ottawa Hypergrammar. (2021). https://arts.uottawa.ca/writingcentre/en/hypergrammar

OWL Purdue. (2021). https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/grammar/index.html

17. Agreements

Agreement in writing makes your content clearer and more readable. When revising, check these specific areas of writing to check for agreement.

Subject Verb Agreement

Subjects of sentences – nouns – are singular or plural and the verb form must agree with the noun.

Subject-Verb error:	*Subject-Verb agreement:*
We is going to the store.	*We **are** going to the store.*
I were a student at Niagara College	*I **was** a student at Niagara College.*

Consistent Verb Tense: Past, Present, Future

Be consistent with your verb tense.

If you are doing something now, use the present tense. If it happened in the past, use the past tense. If it has yet to happen, use the future tense.

Present:	I **am** watching the new Ryan Reynolds movie.
Past:	I **saw** the new Ryan Reynolds movie last night.
Future:	I **will be** seeing the new Ryan Reynolds movie tomorrow.

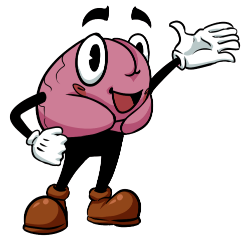
Pronouns

Pronouns replace nouns to avoid repetition of the noun, which can be annoying. The pronoun verb agreement should follow the noun-verb agreement (singular to singular, plural to plural).

Adele loves to sing for people and she started to perform when she was only four years old.

Language evolves and reflects society changes and needs. Over the past decade, the ability to use the plural pronouns (they, their, they're) for a person based on the individual's preference has become more widely accepted. Many people now include their pronoun preference in emails and other written communication. When using a plural pronoun for a singular noun, be careful to make sure it matches the correct noun and reflects the individuals pronoun preference. When in doubt, check with the person involved.

18. Punctuation

Punctuation is the body language of writing. 

Commas, those useful periods with a tail, let the reader know what goes together, what information is essential, and clarify our descriptions. They are not seasoning to your words and should not be sprinkled randomly in your writing like salt and pepper.

Comma use guidelines:

1. Join independent clauses with a conjunction: comma FANBOYS (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So).

*Example: Students of communications courses know only too well how important clear writing is**, and** they practice their skills whenever they write.*

2. Separate items in a list.

*Example: Communications courses provide you opportunities to increase **research skills, develop organization abilities, and apply proofreading techniques**.*

Oxford Comma, also known as the Serial Comma, makes your information clear for the reader. It identifies whether something is included or not in the list or group. This is essential to use when you are describing specific services or treatments and the costs.

*Example: All hair services include shampoo, conditioner, **massage and deep treatments** at additional cost.*

In this version, the massage and deep treatment would be at additional cost and may only be offered together. An Oxford comma after "massage" indicates the deep treatments are at an additional cost.

*Example: All hair services include shampoo, conditioner, **massage, and deep treatments** at additional costs.*

3. Set aside non-essential information in a sentence.

Commas can let a reader know **that, while interesting, the** material between the commas does not change the meaning of the sentence. Just like that sentence.

4. After an introductory phrase.

Introductory phrases, or dependent clauses, can be identified by a comma at the end of the phrase before the main sentence information is provided.

*Example: **When I first entered the shop,** it was evident the owner took great pleasure in displaying fine art work created by community members.*

5. Between coordinating adjectives.

When commas appear between adjectives, it is signifies the order of those adjectives is *not* essential.

*Example: Participating in the Coldest Night of the Year event every February is a **healthy, fun, friendly** way to raise money for community services.*

***Semi-Colon and Colon**.*

The semi-colon and colon, while some may use interchangeably, have different roles to clarify what the writer means.

A s**emi-colon** (comma with intent) can link two independent clauses that are closely related without using a FANBOYS. It also can be used to separate items in a complicated list that already contains commas.

Examples:

Ryan Reynolds has a talent of picking movies with fascinating story-lines; they explore personal stories we have all experienced.

Ryan Reynolds, a great Canadian Actor, donates time and energy to a variety of charities including Covenant House, in Toronto and Vancouver, that assists homeless youth; organizations that help with food insecurity, such as Food Banks Canada, and Feed America; and the Toronto based Sick Kids Charities to support children, and their families, as they face serious illness.

A writer uses a **colon** to introduce a list, or summarize an idea. Remember to keep the verb and object together: a colon should not separate them.

Examples:

There are many effective ways to use a colon: as a tool to focus the reader's attention, to introduce a list, to summarize the main point of the previous independent clause.

Remember to keep the verb and object together: a colon should not separate them.

***Apostrophes** signify contractions and possession.*

Contractions occur when writing reflects the common use of words and the apostrophe signifies the combining of two words and the removal of a letter or letters to make the contraction. In formal academic writing, contractions are not used. Business writing is much more accepting of the contraction.

Examples: Could not = couldn't Have not = haven't Do not = don't Can not = can't

With everything in English, there are exceptions:

Exception Examples: Will not = won't

An **apostrophe** s at the end of a noun demonstrates **possession.** In this case, the apostrophe usually signifies the removal of the noun phrase to show ownership – "the *noun* of…".

Examples: Susan's books = the books of Susan. Simranpreet's pens = the pens of Simranpreet

When appearing for a word that ends in a **s** already, you can use s' (British and Canadian spelling) or s's (American spelling).

An important **exception to the apostrophe rule** involves "it". It's is a contraction meaning it is. Its is a possession meaning something that belongs to it.

"Quotation marks"

To indicate you are quoting someone – using someone else's words – use **Quotation marks** around the passage. Please double check to make sure you have copied the wording exactly so you don't misrepresent the original version or author. If there is a quotation within a quotation, you can use the apostrophe to designate that portion of the text.

Example: "An important exception to the apostrophe rule involves 'it'. It's is a contraction meaning it is. Its is a possession meaning something that belongs to it."

!!!! Exclamation mark!!!!

The Exclamation mark, used frequently in our personal writing of posts and texts, has no place in business writing. It can communicate a less than professional attitude and once your audience has that impression, it is hard to re-impress.

Consider the audience and context. If you're not sure, let the word choice communicate your enthusiasm and avoid the !!!!

Other useful marks to get the most out of your writing: **brackets** [ ], **parenthesis** ( ), **ellipses** … , **dashes** -, and **ampersand** &.

Brackets and parenthesis are useful for setting aside information either to explain or provide an example. Ellipse – a series of three periods – are used to signify a pause or when used in brackets in a quotation, it shows a selection of words removed (usually to shorten the passage). Dashes – like parenthesis – are used to set aside information. The ampersand sign & is short form for "and".

Emojis are not – yet – punctuation marks. Appropriate in texts, and sms posts, not so appropriate in business writing.

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19. Modifiers

Modifiers can make your words come alive with description. Adjectives modify nouns and adverbs modify verbs. Unfortunately, misplaced or dangling modifiers can make your writing unintentionally funny or worse, unintelligible.

A modifier should be placed closest to the word it modifies.

Correct placement:

The salon was situated *perfectly* on a street with *plenty of accessible* parking .

This identifies the location of the salon was perfect and that there was plenty of accessible parking.

When it is **misplaced**, a modifier describes something you did not intend.

Misplaced modifier:

The salon was situated on a street with *plenty of accessible* parking, *perfectly*.

In this case, the perfectly now relates to parking, which was not the intention.

Dangling modifiers are left with nothing to do. Usually found in a dependent clause or phrase at the start or end of a sentence. they are left describing nothing which makes your writing sloppy.

Dangling modifier:

Running late for class, the stylist welcomed me for my haircut.

It is unclear if the stylist is late for class, if you are, or why that dangling modifying phrase is even there.

Fixed:

Because I was running late for my class, the stylist welcomed me later for my haircut.

It is now clear who was running late and what the result was.

Before sending your words out for someone else to read, check to make sure your modifiers are where they belong and make your words clearer, not more confusing.

20. Word Choices

Word Choice

Our style is about the words we chose to represent our thoughts. Be clear on what your style is and choose your words to match.

However, there are some word choice cautions.

Avoid any language that is or may be discriminatory or otherwise minimize another person or persons.

Avoid using pretentious words that make your meaning unclear. Bigger is not always better. For example, "When there is moisture in the atmosphere, I employ the water removing device of my vehicle." Turning on the windshield wipers when it rains would be simpler, clearer, and more concise.

Words that reflect bias should also be avoided. In particular, professions that may have been identified by the role and "man" are no longer acceptable. For example, mailman is replaced by mail carrier.

Homonyms, Homophones, Homographs

Homonyms is the general terms used for homophones and homographs (

Homophones are words that sound alike but are usually spelled differently and mean different things such as bear (the animal) and bare (unclothed). Other common homophones are to, two, and too; there, their, and they're.

Homographs are words that are spelled the same but mean different things based on the context such as a bow (in your hair) and to take a bow (bend at the waist).

Spellcheck is a good first review, but you should double check those words you know trip you up. Paste a "to check" list in the front of your dictionary if necessary.

It is your job to make sure the words you choose match the words you mean.

For more information, please check out Miriam and Webster's article on Homophones, Homographs, and Homonyms.

Appendix A: Worksheets

Shape Worksheet

Shape Worksheet

Audience Analysis and Action Worksheet

Audience Analysis and Action Worksheet

Appendix B: Formats

Memo Format

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: John Smith, Branch Manager

FROM: Michael Ireland, General Manager

DATE: July 8, 2021

SUBJECT: Meeting for Branch Managers

The Human Resource Department has announced improvements in the employee benefit plan.

A meeting to explain our new benefits package will be held on Tuesday, August 28, 2018 at 9:00 a.m., in Conference Room A adjoining my office.

Please read the enclosed booklet about the package before the meeting and let me know if you have any questions about it.

Enclosure

Memo Format

Letter Format

Custom Consulting, Inc.

6112 Speedway Boulevard

Burlington, ON

L3C 1S1

Telephone: (905) 453-0654 FAX: (317) 555-1656

December 7, 2018

Mr. Henry Daughenbaugh

Reservations Manager

Palmer Convention Centre

6500 Youka Street

Newmarket, ON

L6J 4W2

Dear Mr. Daughenbaugh:

This letter is prepared in the block style format. All of the lines begin at the left margin and this style will be used for class purposes throughout the semester. It is the letter format of choice throughout the world.

The block format is the most streamlined letter style because it eliminates the need to set tab stops or to indent paragraphs. In our fast-paced world, this serves as a welcome time-saving device.

Enclosed is the booklet, Today's Letter Styles, which has additional information on letter styles. Please call me at 1-800-555-8268 if you have any questions about the block style format.

Sincerely yours,

Charlotte B. Gayles

National Sales Manager

CG/lw Enclosure

cc: Bud Ehrlick

Letter Format